



# POPULAR CULTURE IN KARNATAKA

ESSAYS ON SOME TOPICS  
RELATING TO THE SUBJECT

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## PREFACE

ABOUT ten years ago, when Sir R. Venkataratnam Naidu was its Vice-Chancellor, the Madras University instituted a scheme of lectures in the main vernaculars of South India on subjects relating to Oriental culture. The honour of delivering the first series in Kannada came to me and I chose as my subject the popular culture of the Kannada country. The substance of the four lectures which I then delivered was published in Kannada sometime thereafter. Sir R. Venkataratnam Naidu desired that the matter should be published in English also but I was not able to do this then. A draft of the present book was, however, ready in 1931. Want of leisure has delayed its revision and publication till now.

The topics dealt with in the book do not cover the whole ground of popular culture. Other possible sections have been omitted for fear of a repetition of ideas of which there is some in the book even as it is. The influence of other religions and of modern ideas on the culture of the people has not been discussed at any length. The bases of the popular culture of the country are in the main the same as before and they are what I have tried to set out in this small book.

Some portions of the book have appeared elsewhere in a somewhat different form previously: the section regarding the Dharwar songs as an appendix to the report of the 1931 Census of Mysore, the part regarding Basavanna in the *Journal of the Mythic Society*, Bangalore, and as a pamphlet issued by the



Virasaiva Taruna Sangha, Gadag, and those regarding Purandaradasa and the other Haridasas in the *Triveni*, Madras.

It is perhaps unnecessary but it might be just as well to say that no claim is advanced that the popular culture of the Karnataka is separate or different from the popular culture of other parts of India. The ruling ideas of nearly the whole of India on essential topics relating to life are more or less the same. But each area wears these ideas with a difference and the men who built up the culture of one locality and the movements which contributed to it are necessarily often different from those of other localities.

I am grateful to my esteemed senior Mr. N. S. Subba Rao for having seen the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. I have to thank also two other friends Messrs. V. Sitaramia and T. Venkatarangan for help in seeing the book through the Press.

M. VENKATESA IYENGAR.

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# POPULAR CULTURE IN KARNATAKA

## 1. INTRODUCTORY

KARNATAKA is the Sanskrit form of Kannada which is the name of the country now covered by the State of Mysore and a surrounding area as also of the language spoken by the majority of the people living in this country. The earliest known rhetorician and poet of Kannada states that the language was then spoken in the country between the Cauvery and the Godaveri and that the heart of the Karnataka was a place in what now is Dharwar District. The language has lost in prestige and currency in recent times, the margin of the country in which it is spoken having shrunk, and the centre shifted a little to the south. What is worse the area has been split into five parts under five different administrations. The largest of these divisions is the State of Mysore.

It is a beautiful country lying on both sides of the Western Ghats, stretching on the east to within a hundred and fifty miles of the Bay of Bengal and touching on the west the Arabian Sea. On the south it ends in a mighty concourse of hills which on account of the colour it wears to the eye from a distance has been called "Nilagiri" or Blue Mountain. The country is traversed by many a stream and river which help cultivation and support a busy and thrifty population. In the majestic and forest-clad peaks of the Western Ghats and the chasms through which the

Cauvery and the Sharavati have lowered their water from the high plains or the hill country to near the level of the sea and in the league on league of cultivated land in the plains, strangers visiting the country have seen a combination of the beauty of many another land. A journey through the Karnataka strikes new eyes as not so much a journey as progress through a garden. Even to eyes which see it every day, this beauty does not grow stale.

A country so beautiful and rich could hardly have an uneventful history. Many a local tradition speaks of the stay of Ramachandra and Sita here on their way to the south as also of the Pandava brothers and the Kings of the *Mahabharata*. Here, if tradition is to be believed, the civilisation of the Aryan from the North first came into serious conflict with that other civilisation of the South of which Lanka was the richest expression. Somewhere here was the kingdom of Virata in which the Pandava princes found refuge in the last year of their exile. Later times saw alarms and excursions in plenty, and the country has been ruled over by kings of many dynasties, Kadamba and Chola, Ganga and Chalukya, Kalachurya and Rashtrakuta, who exercised power from capitals in the north and south and in the heart of the Karnataka itself. It came under the sway of the Vijayanagar Kings and then many a local chieftain who took advantage of the confusion of the dissolution of that empire to set up as an independent prince. It came last under the Rajas of Mysore and was for a short time under Haider and Tipu. At the time of the restoration of the present Royal House on the close of the Mysore

Wars at the end of the eighteenth century, it suffered the fragmentation which to-day is its greatest disadvantage. Since then, however, the country has perhaps for the first time in many centuries had peace for over a hundred years together.

One would imagine that a political history so disturbed should have left the populace little leisure for the arts of peace and that the country should have lagged behind in civilisation and culture. No doubt this too has happened. Yet in the earliest times known to us this land had the elements of some civilisation. The *Ramayana* contains references to a civilisation of the south midway between those of Ayodhya and Lanka. Excavations at Chandravalli in the north of Mysore show the existence of some kind of town life here two or three thousand years ago. Some articles found in the diggings at Mahenjodaro would seem to be of Mysore origin. Through the centuries of war and conquest the population kept its culture alive and, in such intervals of peace as a prince more powerful than others gave it from time to time, evolved arts and crafts with commendable enterprise and added to the inheritance. It developed a school of music which is called the Karnataka School and which has spread all over the south. It is true that in later times this music has had more votaries in the Tamil than in the Kannada country and that the language of the best songs of later times in it is Telugu, not Kannada. That does not, however, affect the fact that the Karnatak country gave birth to the School. The name it bears like the names of places we often bear at the beginning of our own names indicates

where it arose. There is also a tradition that the earliest musician to set the tunes to notation and popularise them was Purandaradasa—a Vaishnavite saint of the Karnataka who composed innumerable devotional songs in Kannada. A distinctive style in architecture and sculpture which has been called the Chalukya or Hoysala School was also developed in the Karnataka in the course of the centuries. Numerous temples built in this style are found scattered over the Mysore country and in the neighbourhood testifying to the people's love of art no less than to their religious sense and devotion. In painting there is no such characteristic school but Ajanta is just off the old boundary of Karnataka and this area may have contributed artists for the paintings found in that storehouse of Indian art. Throughout the centuries, however, indigenous artists have painted pictures of various aspects of the godhead for the devout both for worship and for decoration and there has been some secular painting too of kings and princes and such like celebrities.

Equally notable has been the contribution of the Karnataka to the development of Indian religion and philosophy. What part if any Buddhism, while it was still active in India, played in the life of this area, it is difficult to say. Some edicts of Asoka have been found here and as has already been stated Ajanta is off its northern end. Jainism, however, has been one of the main religions in this area since the days perhaps of Chandragupta. An important place of Jain pilgrimage is located in the heart of what was once the Hoysala country and not a few of the temples

built in the Hoysala style of architecture are dedicated to Jain deities. A considerable part of the population even now is of this religion. The great philosopher Sankara stayed in Sringeri in the Karnatak hill country for some time and established a monastery there. To-day it is the most important of the five mutts which he is reputed to have established at various places in India. Persecuted in the country of his birth it was to Mysore that Ramanuja fled. There, with the support of the Hoysala King Vishnu Vardhana, he spread his creed of devotion to Vishnu among the people. A mutt which he established is still in existence in Melkote in Mysore District. Madhwa, the third great Acharya, was perhaps a Kannadiga himself. He was born in the western coast country and found ardent followers in the Karnataka. All the three important monasteries of his school of philosophy are now located in the Mysore State. Another religious movement no less important than these and perhaps more notable as a protestant movement was the Virasaiva movement, the leader and spokesman of which, the great Basava, was out and out a Kannada man. This movement made a noble effort to lift the dead weight of custom from the life of the masses and to set them on the path to a worthier life than they had ever thought of before. It used the vernaculars for expressing the best thoughts of the nation and for placing the highest ideals before the common people and appealed to their better sense in the interests of common humanity and a simple and pure faith.

The full and varied political and religious history



of the country is well reflected in the literature. The earliest Kannada work so far found belongs to the ninth century but it is so finished a piece of composition that the art of verse should have been cultivated in the language for some centuries previously. Poets have written in the language almost continuously ever since widening range of subjects, developing metres, and enriching expression in the language. Mahamahopadhyaya Praktana Vimarsa Vichakshana (the late) R. Narasimhacharya who compiled the lives of Kannada poets gave the names of over a thousand poets in all. It is true that not much of the work is of permanent worth or universal value but this worth and this value are not found in much literature of any age or clime. It is also unfair to ask of all literary composition, so soon as it reaches the level that we call good, that it should be poetry not for an age but for all time and not for the people for whom it is written but for all climes. If a work filled a genuine need of the time in which it was composed and pleases readers of a later generation who are sympathetically disposed to the setting of its ideas, it should be considered as successful. Many books in Kannada literature should be considered successful in this sense while some small number will, when they have become known, be accepted as satisfying even the higher standard of universal value. Among the most popular works in the language are the *Jaimini Bharata* of Lakshmisā, the *Bharata* of Kumara Vyasa and the *Virasaiva Puranas*. The poems of Pampa and his successors in Sanskrit metres are all in a highly polished style and show great skill in composition.

They achieve a level of success seen only in the best works of other languages. Kumara Vyasa's *Bharata*, which is a narrative of the first ten books of the *Mahabharata* in a popular metre, attains a height in power of narration, beauty of description, insight into human character and vision in the use of words that variously remind one of Milton, Wordsworth, Shakespeare and Keats in English literature. Kannada has thus had a literature far larger than most Indian languages and for as long as most European languages and the oldest Indian language except perhaps one or two.

It is natural that a people who developed such art and lived so eventful a life should have loved the country in which their lives were set. The Karnataka seems at all times to have inspired in its children an intense feeling of patriotism. Pampa, one of the greatest poets in the language, gave expression to this love in a verse whose classic elegance has received a new glow from the warmth of the emotion behind it; at all moments of great happiness and in moments of great pain, he says, his mind remembers this country. A poet of Chikdevaraya's Court in Mysore speaks in loving praise of his country, its arts, and its wealth, of the beauty of his land and its people. Even the poet of a popular verse story begins his work speaking of Kalinga, a cowherd who lived in Karnataka—a country radiant in the midst of the world. It is unnecessary to say that this feeling has found expression in fervent words in recent years. This was only to be expected from the divided condition of the country and a pathetic effort has been made by the writers

in the language to keep together in the field of literature the mind of a people which is politically divided between five administrations.

Throughout the centuries there has been a steady and persistent effort on the part of the leaders in the country to educate the people. It is usual to say that Hinduism made knowledge a sealed book to the people. Certain types of knowledge were no doubt reserved for acquisition by the higher classes. This reservation later assumed the form of a privilege but it is not clear that it began by way of one. The study of the Vedas was said to be the Brahman's duty. The classes which were assigned other duties and could not sit down to this work were given the essential parts of knowledge in forms in which it could be easily assimilated. This at any rate is the impression created by the religious history of the Karnataka. Sankaracharya gave the essentials of his religious teaching in the many verses and prayers which he wrote for the people. Ramanujacharya converted large masses of people to his creed of devotion. Basavanna introduced the principle of expressing the best thoughts in the vernacular of the people. He instituted or revived the order of the Jangama or poor priest to convey knowledge to the people. The Haridasa movement put the finest thoughts of the devotional school into popular song and took them from door to door. The same time saw the beginning of a popular movement in literature. Writers developed vernacular metres for narrating religious stories and placed a combination of poetry, religion and philosophy within reach of the commonest people in language

that all could understand. Verse recitations and narrations of divine stories became common features of village life. Not many people knew reading and writing but the number of people who heard these recitations and stories and enjoyed good literature and got into touch with the best thought of the time was larger than we ordinarily imagine. We shall not be far wrong if we say that the number of people who enjoyed such good poetry as there existed was far larger in those untaught times than in these days of so-called universal education.

The centuries of eventful history, of literary and artistic activity, and of propaganda have impressed themselves on the minds of the people and left marks in the form of many a tradition and belief. The sum total of these is what determines the people's attitude in life and may be called popular culture. It may not be possible to describe this culture or this attitude in a few clear words but that they are there is evident to whoever looks on that life. Foreigners indeed have in the recent past found not much good in the social customs and manner of life of the country. The fault in these cases is however not so much in the life that was seen as in the eye that saw: a critic like the Abbe Dubois who starts with the conviction that he is looking on a barbaric society sees only those features of its life that confirm his conviction. If one like Fa-Hien should come and look at it with reverence, he sees only the features that can edify him. The truth, as in most cases of this kind, lies somewhere between. Each society develops the institutions which it thinks will best embody its ideas

of well-being. It may make mistakes in devising the forms for the ideas. The worthier the idea the less the likelihood of its being fully realised in the form. Excessive praise or fault-finding in the observer is the result of viewing the idea only or the form only. Any view in order to be correct should consider both. Looked at in this way the life of the Karnataka shows that it has tried to assimilate the great truths of religion, philosophy and art. Many a fruitful belief is, it is true, now atrophied and inoperative, but even as a failure it indicates what was attempted. Life in the Karnataka country has not been wanting in the enterprise that tries to make man's stay on earth fruitful and happy nor in the wisdom that acknowledges the limitations which make complete success in the adventure impossible.

Almost anywhere in the country one may hear the lad driving his cart sing a song of the *Haridasa* or the *Sivasarana*. "This body is yours," says the song, "and so is this life. The sorrow and the joy that come to me from day to day—all this is yours." Or "take hold of the preceptor's feet; nor give it up ever. Nor ever disregard the words of your mother." This philosophy, this ethical code, this religion in music, are part of the routine of his life. He has heard the song in the house of worship in his village; or when a mendicant of the Vaishnava or Saiva order came around for alms. It is possible he heard it in a *Harikatha*, or recitation of a divine story. Children of the better classes would have heard them sung in the course of religious ceremonial in their houses. Many an old man who knows neither reading nor writing is yet

fully posted with all the details of Sita's or Dhruva's story. He heard it when very young at the reading of the stories by some person in his village. He has thus known in his life the joy of good poetry and not having seen much his taste is fairly correct. In the country near the temples the music of the architecture seems to have passed into the minds of the people. So serene and handsome are many faces. Nor is it unusual to find here a quaint but sound judgment about a work of art. In the temple at Somanathpur, there was a watchman some years ago. One of the shrines in the temple has lost the original image and a new one sculptured to fill the gap is now placed in it. Judged by ordinary standards the new image is not very bad, but it does seem a pitiful pretence of art alongside of the perfect statuary of the other two shrines. When a visitor had finished these two and wished to get into the third shrine the watchman would say "There is nothing there, Sir. Why do you go to see that image? It is the work of common men."

A deep and real culture has, as it were, transfused the very air that the people are breathing and it appears in all the many acts of their lives and often in the words which they use without realising the full meaning. A man who feels that another has been unfair to him says, "Very well, go and prosper; God will see to the right." Another who is indisposed says "My body is not well." The belief in the first case that there is a ruler over the world and that his rule is just and efficient and the implication in the second case that the "I" is not the body but something else are noteworthy. The full significance of the words in

either instance may not be present to the mind of every person using them. Not many even of more learned people in any society can have fully realised the truths and lived in the thought that they are souls and not bodies and that God sees all their deeds and is efficient to punish and save. It need not therefore be wondered at if the participant in a street quarrel in the village or his cousin lying ill in the house does not fully grasp all the implications of his words. What is important is that the words are there and the truth somewhere near behind. If these truths are near the doorway of the mind life will open that door to them at an opportune moment and they will get in. The culture of a people has succeeded when it has placed such truth near the door of the individual mind. I once asked an old woman in the Malnad where her husband was and she said, "He has gone to Sivanapuri." I said, "Where is Sivanapuri?" and the people laughed. She meant by Sivanapuri the City of God but as the name had the form of a town-name I took it as one. What partly misled me was the form of the verb. "Has gone," implies a return; it suggests severance or departure which is not final. To this Sivachar woman, brought up in a pure and simple faith, death did not appear as the end of all life. Rather was it a journey to another and a better place and he who went there lived in the immediate presence of God.

The lives led by the people in the villages show signs of the same depth of culture. People of what in another order of society would be several families live here in single households and with the differences

inevitable in such cases yield obedience for the common good to the rule of an old mother or father or an elder brother out of filial piety and fraternal affection. Communities with different notions of the proper way of life and of daily conduct and worshipping what it has become usual to call different gods have lived in these villages for centuries in amity and peace and working for the common good. Their lives are often full of little acts of public beneficence. A grove of trees here to give shade to the traveller, a pond there in which cattle and men may drink water, a stone bench here for the weary or those at leisure to sit on, a stone slab there for the labourer returning from his field to rest his load on for a minute, these and such like little acts showing the kindness and love of humanity of their nameless authors are of frequent occurrence in our villages. Their history is full of stories in which a man gave up his life for the common good. Such sacrifice in the past was commemorated on slabs of stone. In the sculpture on these slabs we see the ideas that ruled the people's minds. The man whose sacrifice is commemorated is shown dying in the lower part of the stone and in the upper part pictured as happy in celestial company, first as attended on by the nymphs of heaven and later as worshipping in the presence of God. Life to-day makes no such demands on the individual but when it does the people have not lacked in bravery. Cow-herd lads have attacked and killed single-handed or in company, with weapons no better than sticks and staves or at the most a large sickle, panthers and other wild beasts which more civilised courage armed with



a modern gun hesitates to meet except from a position of vantage. The courage shown in these cases is not altogether born of ignorance. It is partly of that kind no doubt but partly also it is the result of a tradition of not flinching in the face of danger.

It is not suggested that this is a complete picture of the culture of the people. There are parts of that culture that are not so edifying. Popular religion in the country includes forms of worship utterly inconsistent with the high ideas of the godhead which the better creeds have tried to spread among the people. The village goddess is still a powerful factor in the life of the village. She gets the usual tribute of animal life year by year and the same people who offer sugar and cocoanut in the temple of Rama get buffaloes and goats killed in front of Mari. The spirit of compromise which has always ruled Hinduism prevented any attempt being made to depose Mari when it could have been made. By this religious diplomacy a place in the people's heart was rather easily secured for Rama. But Mari too obtained a place in the pantheon; lower than that of the great Gods but by no means despicable. Thus, to-day even the castes which do not worship Mari are unwilling to deny her. You may be in favour with the master but need not fall out with the servant on that account. Mari for example is the deity who brings small-pox and such other diseases. When these diseases appear the lower castes sacrifice to Mari and the higher castes conduct special worship in temples to make the disease subside; when the disease does not subside in spite of special worship to Ranganatha, or Sreenivasa, the

inference follows that Mari is not to be despised even by the worshipper of the higher deity.

Religious imagination, moved by ideas of the god-head but not tethered to one allegiance, leads directly to superstition. Superstitions about the days of the week and months of the year, about the sun and planets and the stars and the moon, rule the lives of this people to-day. They will not, for example, agree to extend the village to the south-east. It is the direction of fire and extension in that direction bodes disaster. Quite often fertile land close to the village is left uncultivated. Enquiry shows that the land was held previously by one or two persons and that they had misfortune. The misfortune attaches to the land and people fear to take it up. Superstition of this kind makes the astrologer and diviner most powerful persons in the life of a village. When plague broke out in one village the diviner delivered a message from Mari that she would take only nine lives. Attempts to make the people evacuate the village were useless. They were to lose only nine lives, they said. The plague killed seven times that number and yet the people were unwilling to leave the village. If Mari for some reason did not keep her word what would be gained by running away? She would follow wheresoever they went and take the lives she wanted.

Degeneration is visible also in social institutions and in religious ceremonies. An example of the first is the system of caste. This institution has been the subject of much criticism and praise by persons of different views. It may have its good points and much perhaps was done by it in preserving society in

the past. Now, however, it is tending to multiply endlessly and has become just a barrier between community and community and a constant cause of mutual distrust. Marriage which was thought of as a sacramental contract to be entered into by persons competent by years to understand the significance of the social duty they are undertaking, is conducted in a language which few of the parties to the contract understand and the promises required both of bride and bridegroom are uttered by a priest who also, in many cases, does not understand what he is repeating. The same statement applies to many other ceremonies which are observed in the form but of which the essential is completely ignored. Death ceremonies among the better classes are an incongruous medley of ritual suggested by many kinds of belief in a life beyond death. In most of these cases the ideas that informed the ceremonies are no longer consciously accepted. The loving brother Yudhishthira in the Mahabharata carried the corpse of the younger Bhima when he dropped dead. This society is similarly carrying the shell of many a custom from which the life has departed, loving it from habit and unwilling to give it up.

Defects like these are however inevitable at some stage in any culture. Perfection in society is perhaps only a dream. While, however, it has to be recognised that defects are inevitable, a society should not act as if it thought them desirable. It should brace itself to fight against the evil it finds in its midst. Healthy life for it consists in vigilance against the form which that evil assumes from time to time. Society in the

## INTRODUCTORY

Karnataka country has ceased for some time now to work actively for improvement. Its armoury of religion, philosophy and poetry is rather rusted. It was not however always so apathetic. There were days when it sought to know the good and the true and to range itself on their side. Its teachers made belief in a just and good God and a sense of the dignity of the human soul the common property of all men and induced in the average mind a sturdy attitude in the face of life and courage in the face of death. Their work is not yet over. When the country begins to take a full view of its life and to build again it will find ready to hand the basis of a culture which essentially is neither mean nor ignoble. In the essays that follow an attempt has been made to indicate this basis of the culture of this people by describing the main features of the movements which aimed at popular uplift and the manner in which the popular mind has responded to them.

## 2. THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT: BASAVANNA

THE Virasaiva movement led by Basavanna made the first great effort known in the Karnataka to employ the mother-tongue of the people for original statement of high thought and religion. The movement tried to change the life of the masses in many directions but more important than any change effected or attempted was the attitude of self-examination and self-respect which it seems to have made common among its followers. Basavanna himself was an example of this attitude to his generation as seen from his sayings which were recorded for the benefit of followers. These sayings have formed, as it were, a code of Virasaiva teaching and have influenced the followers of the creed of *Sivachara* ever since.

Basavanna's life is not definitely known in more detail than the life of many another great man in Indian history and poetry has hidden much truth in speaking of it. The following facts are, however, generally accepted. He was born and did his work in the twelfth century; he came of Brahmin stock; gave up the practices of his community as they seemed to him too ritualistic and over-formal; went over to the Virasaiva faith which in those days seems to have been making headway in the country; became employed in the court of Bijjala in Kalyan and rose to considerable power; and used his unequalled abilities and opportunities for spreading the faith which he had adopted. This active propaganda on behalf of a faith made enemies and there was civil disturbance

in the country. Bijjala, Basavanna's patron but probably an opponent of too rapid reform, met his end in these disturbances. Basavanna also was in fear of assassination from enemies. It is likely that he was assassinated. At any rate, he disappeared from life about the same time. To most men in his day he must have seemed a fanatic, too eager for change and unmindful of the commotion he was causing in the name of popular uplift. Even to men on his own side he did not always seem faultless. Many people of his and later generations however saw in his life an achievement possible only to an incarnation of godhead. These people deified him and worshipped him. His followers believe that he was an incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva, sent to the world to resuscitate the true faith.

The sayings of Basavanna appear mostly to have been recorded from time to time to express the thoughts that were passing through his mind. This seems to have been the practice of the leaders of the movement. As success came, as criticism came, as friends praised, as enemies derided, as his own heart seemed to approach and recede from an ideal which his conscience set before him, this man gave expression to his joy, his pain, his modesty, his confidence, his exaltation and his depression in a sort of diary. Several of the 'vachanas' seem to have been called forth by events in the society of which Basavanna was leader. Some of them look as if they were his opinion in cases referred to him by the elders. Others relate to social practices in the new community. The observations are generally addressed to his deity Kudala Sangameswara or

he calls on the divine name after recording a sentiment. Each entry is short, but possibly several were written when he was passing through one mood. They are somewhat in the style of the meditations of Marcus Aurelius or of the Imitation of Christ. Whatever the mood they express they show an intensely human person, noble of nature, inherently modest, yet courageous in action, feeling his human weakness but strong in his reliance on God, very lovable, very kindly, ever striving after good. They constitute a record of religious experience of a kind not often met with in Indian literature nor very often even in the world's literature.

Typical of the school of devotion is Basavanna's intensely human cry to God to answer and accept him. God in this case is a very personal and real being to whom the devotee speaks as to another human.

"Lord, Lord, I am crying; Lord, Lord, I am wailing;  
O Lord, why not answer in reply? I am always calling  
to you; why are you silent? Why do you not answer?  
O God Kudala Sangama!"

God he says was responsible for this life. The circumstances were not determined by the devotee's choice. God should therefore own that life. Was it in the devotee's power to be born where he, not his God, wished? Or could he die but where God would end him? Was it in his power to be but where God kept him? God should therefore take pity and accept the devotee. Where the circumstances were harsh and he felt helpless Basavanna cried out to God that He was pitiless. Why did God make him a sensitive human creature instead of a tree? He would then have been spared this suffering.

"Alas! my Master, you are without any pity. Alas! my God, you have no mercy. Why did you make me such a traveller on the earth? Why did you create me hopeless of heaven? Why did you give me birth? O God Kudala Sangama, listen and tell me. Could you not have made some plant or tree rather than me?"

To the desolation of this helplessness Basavanna could imagine no conclusion except that of God taking pity and coming to help.

"Like the cow which has lost its way in the jungle, I am crying Amba, Amba. I shall be calling, God Kudala Sangama, until you tell me 'Live thou and be immortal!'"

The simile of the cow and the owner is embodied in one of the names of Siva: Pasupati. He is the Lord of lives and each life is his property. Each life is therefore entitled to call on him for help and if he likes it is saved.

"If you are gracious, the dry stick will give forth shoots. If you are gracious, the dry cow will give milk. With your grace, poison would become ambrosia. With your grace, all good would be at hand. O God Kudala Sangama!"

Most teachers try to lead man to the love of God by saying that the life of the world is no unmixed blessing. This teacher follows the same course. Man in his short existence here thinking of food and raiment seemed to him as to his class like the lamb that is brought to slaughter and eats the leaf tied for decoration. Not knowing that it is brought to die, it feeds its pitiful carcass. Not only is man thinking of food and raiment more than of his immortal soul but for getting these comparatively valueless things he will walk through evil. The frog is caught in the mouth



of the snake, yet snaps at the fly moving near its own mouth. Men must think of the more lasting happiness which comes of trusting in God. If we would get God to save us, however, we should trust fully in Him. People believe not nor have faith but call on God. If they believed and called, would not God answer? Such faith and the service to which it leads are greater than mere learning. He who knows the *Gita* is not wise; nor he who knows the sacred books. He only is wise who trusts in God. Aye! He only! and he who serves the servants of God. He is wise who relies on God and can defy the Lord of Death. This wisdom and service are the only things worth while. What are the life and existence, progress and movement, the word and the being of the man who does not act as God's humblest servant? The devotee should fill his daily life with thought of God. Let him rise at dawn, bring the holy water and the holy leaf and worship God betimes. A little later and who knows him? Let him serve God ere time passes, ere death comes. He should engage in acts of worship, look on when others worship, sing the song of God's praise, rejoice in the presence of God and speak speech concerning the Lord. This it is that is called merging in God. Men often think that they have done all that is necessary when they pay to have worship conducted. Worship is however a matter of personal contact with God. It implies obligations that only the devotee can carry out. It is not considered right, said Basavanna, to get done by another the duty to one's wife, or the feeding of one's body. No more may a man perform the worship of his God by another.

The men who do so do it for show and do not know God. As another teacher elsewhere said, man should worship God with all his heart, with all his soul and with all his strength. Worship God with your heart. Worship God with your body. If you worship but do not give your body and your mind thereto what in your worship will God accept?

This however does not mean that worship should be elaborate. One needs not to bring cart-loads of sacred leaf and pour cauldrons of water on images anywhere and everywhere. Let worship be conducted without fatigue. God does not like fatigue in worship. God does not soften for mere water. He softens for real devotion. The worship done by those who prepare numbers of dishes and place them before the *Linga* and say "we have worshipped" and think how much they have done is useless. They think of the number of dishes and not of Him whom they would serve. This is worship by one who leaves his cheap shoes at the door and goes into the temple, and stands before the Lord; but he is thinking not of God, but of his cheap shoes lest some one carry them away. The house of the man who makes parade and worships and says he is worshipping continuously is like the house of the public woman. As the trumpet's son performing ceremonies names his mother, not his father, those who worship for show look for the world's approval, not God's. The world has got them and owns them. They do not know God. The depth to which worship may be reduced by form appears when a person makes an offering to an image of God but will not use it to relieve need. As serpent

worshippers pour milk on the form of a cobra carved in stone but say "kill, kill" if a real serpent comes, these devotees drive away the servant of God, who would eat if served, but to the Linga which cannot eat offer dish after dish of food. They prefer the counterfeit to the real thing. Then in giving and taking also there is the right and the wrong way. The devotee ought not to give and God's servant ought not to receive from helplessness as when the quarry that cannot run yields its flesh to the hound. To take so is to fall low, to eat human flesh. The giver should give, his body and his mind assenting. The man of God should take only what is so given.

Fasts and other religious observances are similarly reduced to mere form by ignorant persons. They are meant to develop self-control and endurance, but are often undertaken because one can so enjoy delicacies. The discipline of milk, the discipline of the cream of milk, and when cream is over, the discipline of rice and ghee, of butter and of sugar; discipline meaning that a man eat only these things and nothing else. Basavanna saw people with these disciplines but not the man whose discipline was of gruel. Real discipline is something far different. Endurance in whatever happens were discipline, to do without erring were discipline, to speak without uttering falsehood were discipline; when the servants of God come, to give them what one hath as to the owners, that were the discipline of disciplines. Men should attempt these disciplines, not those easier ones. Basavanna's code of conduct for men is thus very high. Man becomes immortal by a good life and remains

mortal in a bad one. The badge of the relationship between God and His servant is to speak the truth, to act according to speech. The worldly man who speaks lies, who acts contrary to speech, God will not accept. The world of Gods and the world of mortals are not different. To speak the truth is the world of the Gods. To speak untrue is the world of mortals. Cleanliness is heaven; uncleanness is hell. This world is the testing-house of the Creator. Whoever passes here passes in the other world. He who does not pass here cannot pass there. Kindness and courtesy are the essential marks of devotion to God. He is a devotee who folds his hands to another devotee. Sweet words are equal to all the penances. Good behaviour is what pleases the God of eternal good. What is that righteousness that has not kindness? To all alike there should be kindness. Kindness is the root of all righteousness. God Kudala Sangama will have naught of aught else.

Basavanna said that he was dull of wit and saw not the way and prayed to God to lead him as they lead the born-blind by staff placed in the hand and teach him to trust and love the way of God's true servants. Man should follow that way and win the love of God. This is the essence of success in life. Without that love life is empty.

"My God, I wait like a woman who has bathed and rubbed on turmeric, and decorated herself, but has not the love of her husband. I have rubbed on the sacred ash. I have put on the holy beads. But Lord, I have not your love. Men of our creed do not live as renegades. Love me and save me, God Kudala Sangama."

People called him a devotee but he felt that the title was above his worth. Like a crown on the head of a dwarf or like the bedecking of a noseless face or a blind man's amour it made his life laughable. He looked at other devotees and felt that he was a jungle-berry by the side of mango fruit. How should he say that he was a devotee, knowing men who were God's servants? In what sense could he be God's servant along with those others who served God? "Smaller than I," he said, "there is none and there is none greater than your servants. Standing in the shade of a tree, who would try to distinguish his own shadow? In the presence of your devotees, what devotion is mine. Would not the claim that I too am a servant destroy?" The utmost that he would claim was that he was a child of the household of God's servants. As leader of the movement however and the man of means who could help religious men he was often the recipient of encomium. He felt himself on trial when praised in this way. Was this the discipline for him, to stand praise and not let it go into the head?

"My people who loved me praised me over and over and raised me to a golden stake. Their praise killed me. Friends, your regard was as a sharp dagger to me! I am hurt; I cannot bear it. O Lord Kudala Sangama, if you would be merciful, come between me and their praise, O Good One!"

Elsewhere he says that the man who found fault with him did him good. Those who praised him only harmed him. Their weapon was of gold because they meant well but it injured nonetheless.

Basavanna is often found speaking of his failure in language common in religious self-condemnation. He says that like the washerman who is anxious for the clothes of the village, he too was foolish and thought of land and money and failed utterly. Men did not know he was an offender in all the three ways. Much show and emptiness were his. He was a vaunter. No more was he in truth than a servant of the saints who had faith in God. Those who are familiar with religious literature will know how to understand this language of humility and strong self-condemnation. The nearer the devotee gets to his ideal the more the remaining distance between him and his goal pains him; as when waiting for a beloved one the last half hour seems longest. Basavanna's ambition was simple but high. He desired not the height of Brahma nor the position of Vishnu nor Siva. He desired no height but this, that he might know the feet of God's saints. This was the height of ambition for him but from this he felt he was always far. He felt that his egoism persisted and this destroys all the good that devotion may do. When the householder truly understands his position he will feel that the house is God's, that he is His agent and serves Him as a servant may in a palace. But Basavanna felt that his devotion had been like the labour of the bull going round the oil mill which had no seed in it; or like eating salt after washing it in water for he felt a pride that he did good. He was not the man who served, nor was he the man who gave, nor was it he that begged. Not only could he take no credit for the good in his deeds but of that which was wanting too

he need not take too much thought. If the servant-girl was indifferent, the mistress must do the work of the household herself. So God was serving in his own household.

Basavanna preached one God, and desired people to give up the many lower forms of worship that then, as at all times, prevailed among them. To the Maraiya and Biraiya, the sky-wanderer and the village trotter, the Antara and Bentara and Kantara, the Malaiya and Ketaiya, who dwell in the barren hillocks and on the wayside, in the wells and tanks and in the flowering shrubs and trees, in the midst of the village and in the squares of towns and in the large banyan tree; and who want gifts of milch buffaloes and little calves; and who get hold of pregnant women and women in confinement, of the young woman and the daughter-in-law and who beg and fill their bellies, to these hundred pots of godhead, is not the one stick 'the Lord Kudala Sangama is our refuge' a sufficient answer? Higher forms of worship are like eating sugarcane or churning curds or spinning fibre: pleasant, profitable and of use. The lower forms are no good. Chew the bamboo leaf; all you get is the chewing itself and no juice. Churn water; all you get is the churning and no butter. Spin sand; all you have done is to spin merely; you get no rope. Bend to Gods other than God Kudala Sangama; you have merely hurt your hand by pounding much bran. Sacrifice of goat and sheep in the name of God, Basavanna said, was wrong. Worship is something cleaner and more spiritual. They keep a lamb for the small divinity who comes in the woods and feel happy. Can

the lamb die and save those whom God has doomed? No need is there for lamb or calf. Bring the holy leaf, bring water from the spring, come in joy and stand humble, and worship Lord Kudala Sangama with heart and soul. Basavanna condemned also the practice of worshipping any and every thing which was common among the people. A pot is divinity; a tree is divinity; the stone in the street is divinity; a lamb is another, the bow and bow-string are still other divinities. The measure is a divinity, the thing measured is another. There was no standing room on account of these many Gods. "Believe me there is but one God and he is our Lord Kudala Sangama." Basavanna should have seen persons who accepted his faith but continued to share in other forms of worship. The men who worshipped God and bowed to lesser divinity were, he said, like the mule born of the ass and the horse. How could he call them devotees? Or servants of God? Or His saints? "Believe me, Lord Kudala Sangama loves not the man of two minds." In another place addressing these people of two minds he said that to the good wife, but one man is husband. To the devotee who can be devoted, but one God is God. Thought of other divinity was evil, to think of another God infidelity. "If God Kudala Sangama should know, he would cut their noses." Cutting the nose seems to have been punishment which in those days a husband who discovered infidelity in his wife could inflict on her.

Basavanna knew man's weakness and distrusted the pleasures of the senses and prayed to God to help him from temptation.



"Spread not the green of the pleasures of the senses before me. What does the brute know but to bend to the grass? Take away my desires, feed me with devotion, and give me a drink of good sense, O God Kudala Sangama!"

He did not however believe in penance and torture in the name of discipline. He remembered that some famous devotees had led normal lives as householders. The denial of our faculties is attended with danger. The five senses trouble always. Did Siriyala and Changale cease to live as husband and wife? Did the Sindhu Ballala couple give up the joys of married life? Sin for God's devotee is in lusting for another's woman, another's money. Not only was mortification of the flesh unnecessary. It obstructed spiritual growth. When you think you mortify yourself you really mortify the divine in yourself. There was no one who tortured the body and the mind and touched God's feet. To say there was any such would destroy. The pain of God's devotee was God's pain. So also ceremonial purification is no good unless the will to purity goes with it.

"Brethren, bathing in the stream and washing yourselves bathe and wash yourselves of the sin of living with strange women, of the lust for another's money. Wash yourselves of these. My Lord Kudala Sangama, if they give up not these but bathe in the stream, the stream will have run in vain for them."

Basavanna thought of his body as his temple for his God. Those who had money might build temples for God; what should a man without money do? He can make his body as a temple, the head being the pinnacle of gold. With the fixed temple others may tamper, not with this moving one. But this implies

that one's thought and acts are worthy of the deity. It is hard to discipline the mind. Teaching of morality touches the mind soon enough but does not reach the heart. On the slightest provocation, the mind reverts to old ways. It is like the dog placed in a palanquin and as soon as it sees its old desires it reverts. It runs to pleasures of the senses and will not permit man to remember his master. God should grant that man may think of Him. Each man too, is more anxious to notice the defects in another than in himself. Men should realise that appearance of goodness is no good. The fact alone avails. Those who appear to be good but not really so, may get on for some time, but will be rejected finally. They are no good in the path of God. He has no use for those whose inner and outer selves are not one, and though He may seem to accept them at first, He will surely reject them in the end. It was usual for people to talk of the three ways of approaching God, the way of knowledge, of devotion, and of good works, and to say that the way of devotion is easier than that of knowledge. Basavanna wished to cure people of the impression that, therefore, the way of devotion was easy. On the contrary, it is a trying way and even dangerous. It is like the saw and cuts going forward and cuts returning. Accepting the way of devotion is really like playing with the serpent. It will not leave us easily. Life will be constantly testing us; and devotion is real only if it can face loss and suffering without flinching. If you should say you believe and have faith and have given yourself to God, He shakes the body and sees, and shakes the mind and sees, and shakes possession and sees. If with all this

you remain firm, He rejoices at the faith. The talk of the various ways as distinct also seemed to Basavanna fallacious. Knowledge or devotion was good but if it did not lead to works it could be of no use. Devotion which does not express itself in service of God is like the love of the wife who is sorry that her husband is grown lean, but does not give him food when he is hungry.

A man's life shows if he has God in his heart, for then like a house in which the owner is dwelling the life will be clean. If he has not God in his heart but puts on the trappings of a servant of God, his life will stink. You may put an iron ring round a pumpkin. It gets no strength from it. It rots all the same. If a man whose mind is not reformed is given the baptism of God's servants, how will he get devotion? He will remain as he was. You may make a Vinayaka out of cow's dung and throw *champaka* flowers on him. He will look pretty but will smell of urine. If you wash a doll made of mud again and again in water it does not change its nature; it only becomes more and more muddy. If you administer the vows of God's servants to a worldly man he does not cease from his wickedness and become a saint. Basavanna should have noticed men of this sort wearing the symbol of religion but leading impure lives. He referred to them and said:

"The body has desires. They eat meat and drink liquor. The eye lusts and they foregather with strange women. What is the use of wearing your symbol, O God Kudala Sangama?"

To God's servants there is no caste. Bad

conduct is low caste. Good conduct is high caste. The real outcastes are not the people born in castes known as depressed but those whose lives are low and depraved. He who kills is the *Madiga*; he who eats forbidden food is the *Holeya*. What is caste, and what is the caste of the men who take life in the name of God? The servants of God Kudala Sangama, who wished good to all beings, were high-born men, the only real aristocracy, the aristocracy of character.

To God's servant all the days and hours are auspicious. The superstitions of astrology and horoscopy cannot dwell with a real faith in God. Say not good day, bad day and so on and so forth. To him who says 'God is my refuge' all days are one. To the man who relies on God, all days are the same. To him who remembers God without remission, every day is like every other day.

Basavanna longed for the relief that comes of true knowledge and devotion. When would the travail of *Samsara* cease? When would his mind be converted? When, ah! when would that time of real bliss come? But he knew that knowledge and devotion come not from man's effort only but by God's grace. It is no use, he told himself, seeing the good and longing for it wistfully. Stretching the arm for the fruit of the palm and looking up only hurts the neck. Man gets nothing till such time as it pleases God to give. But God must give. One might almost say that not to show grace would affect God's prestige. Life was a battle in which Basavanna fought on the side of God. If the servant was beaten, the disgrace would be the master's. He asked God therefore to teach him and

let him win in the fight. He knew he had faults. They seemed to him to be an endless million. But God's patience is limitless. So he was sure of forgiveness. But it seemed at times as if God did not look his way. He thought of God, but He did not know him. He served God but He was not aware of this servant. How should he live? How should he bear existence? God alone was life and light and way for him. He was all the sorrows and all the joys of life to him. He knew none else. God alone was his. His father and his mother was He and his only relative. As physician to the disease of *Samsara* Basavanna had approached Him. He who was the giver of faith should take mercy on the devotee. In one saying Basavanna expressed the attitude of final surrender.

"When I have said that this body is yours, I have no other body; when I have said that this mind is yours, I have no other mind; when I have said that my wealth is yours, there is no other wealth for me. If I have known that all these three possessions of mine are yours, what further thought need I take, O God Kudala Sangama?"

The sayings given above indicate the directions in which the mind of this great teacher of the people flowed and of the pattern of thought which he set to his followers. Basavanna was a sincere seeker after truth and could make sacrifice for what he thought was the truth. He felt a love for mankind that we see only in the greatest teachers of humanity. Love of mankind, pity for mankind, pity indeed for all life, was the central fact of Basavanna's religious teaching. In the midst of wealth and power he strove for realisation

as only few have striven in the course of history. This man looked into himself pitilessly. No part of his being was dark to him. So we hear in these sayings the same voice of our common humanity which is heard in the psalms of the Hebrew King, in the Christian St. Augustine's Confessions, and in the songs of the Vaishnava devotees from Nammalwar to Purandaradasa. Basavanna loved God and he loved those whom he considered the servants of God. All his wealth he held in trust for his God and that God's servants. He had, however, no illusions about the essentials of the service of God. A good life was to him the test of a good faith and a clean life the only proof of faith in God. He believed in heaven and hell, but to his mind heaven and hell were realisable in this life and were close at hand. He scouted the idea of possession of material good for its own sake; but did not preach renunciation as such. To deny the faculties seemed to him futility. To recognise in them impulses through which our nature could rise and to minister wisely to uplift through them; that with him was the main part of religion.

In any history of Indian religion, Basavanna is sure to be given a prominent place. In the history of human religions his place cannot be very different. He came into the midst of a movement for reform, became the leader of the movement, put faith into thousands and thousands of his generation and established on a firm basis the creed that to-day is accepted by three million people and more. The Virasaiva movement was essentially a popular movement. It developed a school of poor priests. It abolished the

## *POPULAR CULTURE IN KARNATAKA*

old priestly class. It adopted the vernacular as the medium for communicating the highest truth to the populace. It gave to women an important place in religious and social life. It set out with one ideal of realisation for every individual, high and low. Much of the credit for these characteristics of the movement should, without doubt, go to Basavanna who first defined the directions in which its work should develop.

### 3. THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT: OTHER TEACHERS AND FOLLOWERS

It has been stated that the Virasaiva movement was essentially a popular movement and that it resulted in a general awakening among the masses. The sayings of Basavanna show the great mind that was at the centre of the movement but that mind could not have done its work if many other minds at the time had not been in tune with it. The success of the Virasaiva movement was due to the fact that large numbers of men and women were ready to follow Basavanna and fight for their view; there were persons in the following who went even further than the leader. An idea of the state of the people's mind at the time and of the attitude which the new teaching developed can be got from the sayings of certain prominent leaders and followers. There is a large number of such persons. Collections of sayings already published contain the work of over two hundred men and women. There is no doubt that the work of a large number has not come down to us. The recorded sayings of many teachers should also be lying unknown in archives from which the future will have to rescue them. A selection of the sayings of the better known of these saints and sages is here given to indicate the thought content of Virasaiva teaching and the types of personality which it developed.

Prominent among the teachers was Allama Prabhu, a contemporary of Basavanna, whose utterances show



great intellectual power. Allama seems to have impressed Basavanna and his other contemporaries with the loftiness of his conceptions and nobility of character. He was undoubtedly a man of realisation. In hill, valley and cave, he said, and in flood and field, everywhere he saw God. Wherever he cast his eyes, there was God. Unseen of eye, invisible to mind, here, there and everywhere was Guheswara overflowing space. Guheswara was the name by which Allama referred to God. It means God of the Cave or, as a modern has put it, King of the Dark Chamber. Here are two other sayings of Allama regarding the nature of the godhead:

"He knows nor diminution, nor growth. He does not move. He is the endless victory. Our Guheswara is the light within the light.

"Like the treasure hidden underground, like the lightning hidden within the cloud, like the light hidden behind the eye, Oh Guheswara, is your being."

Much of the same thought is expressed by Sister Mahadevi, a woman of remarkable power and perception and one of the finest products of the Virasaiva movement. Mahadevi addresses God as Chennamallikarjuna, the beautiful jasmine white one. Chennamallikarjuna, she said, was the whole of the wood and all the divine growth in the wood. He was the animal creation gambolling amidst the trees. And she begged him to fill all space and show his face to her everywhere. Another saint Ramanatha used the simile of the string and beads made familiar by the *Bhagavad-gita* to describe the nature of God. If we only think we see that the bodies are different but the soul is

one. The saints observe however that God is not to be known easily, that in any case those who claim to have known are not in fact the men who have known and that those who have known do not make a boast of the knowledge. Allama was a non-dualist by conviction and said:—

“You say. ‘We know; we know.’ Tell me the manner of your knowing. Will those who know say they know? Oh Guheswara! Those who have known the Unknowable remain unknown.”

In another place he states that the condition in which a man knows himself as knower is necessarily lower than that of realisation. Each man knows according to his measure. How can he know more? Is knowledge so easy? No man can know the unknown. When Guheswara is unknown, it is two; when He is known there is but one. Sister Mahadevi said that those who wish to know are unable to know. God is greater than the greatest. She is unable to define her Chennamallikarjuna. Advaita or non-dualism is correct metaphysics but not correct working philosophy. Said one of the saints:

“They insist on “Advaita” and say everything is Siva. How improper! Everything knows coming and going. Siva does not. He who manipulates the machine is in everything; but can everything be he?”

Self-knowledge and pure life lead men to God. The image made of stone is not God nor that which is made of earth. If a man sees his self and knows who he is, he is God himself. Men should not talk of heaven as another and a distant region. Heaven is here and now. Nor should man make different

programmes for this and the other world. Life should be one process of self-improvement and the present moment is the time to begin it. Heaven is where a man is. So are the mortal and the nether world. The world of Sambhu and Siva is where a man is. There is no world beyond the self. All these worlds are subject to the self. The self is not subject to them. Not realising that God is in the hand, why talk of action in the world and release in heaven? For release there is no difference between the earth and heaven as there is none for gold between the centre and the surface of a ball of gold.

The reader will remember Basavanna's impatience with popular ideas of many and numerous divinities. Allama said much the same thing in other words. He also objected to worship of images. A God for me, a God for you, a God for every house. Alas! devotion had gone—washed away by a flood as it were. May the mind touch the God touched by a chisel? While the body is God's temple, why do men need other temples? While life is the deity, why do they need other images? If God is reduced to stone, what shall the devotee have become?

Accepting religion is acceptance of a way of life, not of a mere symbol. The symbol cannot bring salvation. Only a better life can. The tiger in the picture cannot get hold of a man. All who wear the symbol of God cannot have eternal life. Nor can a teacher give the better life; the disciple should try. One may paint a beautiful and life-like picture. Can one paint life itself? One may take the baptism, not devotion. The life and devotion are God. If conduct

be not pure, the symbol of purity is of no use. What, asked a teacher, does the blind man gain by holding a mirror? Or one who has no knowledge by holding the symbol of God? What boots it if the shape in the picture is beautiful? Or the water in the ditch is clear? What is the good of being learned in religious lore if a man is worldly? God's servants' speech is pure, conduct is pure; God's servants' sight is pure, deed is pure; God's servants' body is pure, life is pure; therefore should we believe that God's servants are God Himself. The inside of the man whose mind is not pure, says one of the teachers, is like the fruit of the wild fig, full of small life.

Righteousness and equanimity are essential marks of a good life. These are not some abstruse and mysterious qualities but capable of being practised in daily life. To be unmoved, whatever others may say, is equanimity. To say, when some one reviles you, that they removed evil from your mind is equanimity. To say, when anyone praises, that they are enemies of your life is equanimity. To be free from unwholesomeness in thought, word, and deed, and to say that God's servants are God's self, that is equanimity. As for righteousness. Chennabasava, nephew of Basavanna, said that to give what one has, not concealing it, is righteousness. Not to borrow when one has not, that is righteousness. Not to touch another's woman, another's money, is righteousness. Not to hanker after other Gods and creeds is righteousness. To prostrate the body at the coming of Kudala Chenna Sanga's devotees, that is the height of righteousness. Not to desire another's gold, says another teacher, is discipline;

not to foregather with strange women is purity; to take no life is the vow. This righteousness in daily life is far rarer than men may imagine.

"God of the Universe, show me just once the men who are content with what the day brings; who stand far from sorrow; who know the within and have forgotten the without; who are blest in the endless bliss. Oh my Father! Give me but this boon."

The religious life is also a life of trust in God and the use of one's earnings for good work. Man may have all he needs, but be unhappy thinking that he has not more. He minimises the good that has come and magnifies the good that has not come and takes thought and worries the soul. As the ant gathers in corn for a half-year, one is small, but one's desire is great. Does the elephant with the huge body desire to provide for the future? See the difference between the ant and the elephant. While there is Siva to know man's every need and feed him, why does man die from vain desire? Why does he not realise that the Almighty Siddalingeswara is looking after him? Has He become poor who gives to all? And why hoard? Men have seen how the wealth of those who earned in the past has ended. For whom then do these hoard? The rain will come again and crops grow, all the time we hope to live. What does the cow when it dies leave hoarded for its calf? The Virasaiva teachers seem to have tried the idea of community property. If a devotee earns, he should apply his earnings while alive to the teachers of God and God's servants. This is the course of true devotion. Should he reserve the earning for wife and children after death, he deviates

from the path of devotion. He is a traitor to God for not rendering unto God's servants the wealth that is God's. Short-sighted desire kills spiritual development. Contentment is the secret of true happiness. There is nothing smaller than desire. There is nothing greater than desirelessness. Death is not long hence, nor hell far. Let not man flow as the flesh prompts and destroy himself. Nothing belongs to man but knowledge. The earth is not his. Gold is not his. Woman is not his. What is his is the jewel of knowledge. The sage ferryman Chowdaiya had no patience with the common attitude in life. Poverty, he said, first is anxious to get food. Getting food it is anxious for clothing. Getting clothes it is anxious to save. Saving it is anxious to get woman. Getting a woman it is anxious to have children. Having children it is anxious to prosper. Prospering it fears loss; avoiding loss it fears death. He found men anxious about one or other of these matters. He had not found one man anxious about God.

As might be expected when large numbers take up the work of spreading a new and popular faith and accept religious life, some of the teachers and workers were not all that they should be. The leaders complain of their discourse being not edifying. The servants of God became servants of man and remembered what had happened to one man and what to another and talked to one another of one man being good and another being bad. Was such talk the holy name that they should repeat it? Was this talk for good men? Allama was quite harsh about such men of religion. They were entitled, as men of God, to give holy water

and sacred food to disciples. Allama said that, being themselves profane, they could not make the water and the food sacred. From the priest whose conduct is not good, neither holy water nor sacrament should be taken. The man of bad conduct should not be considered as a priest. If a teacher should be profane who should be good? If fire loses its power to burn what else will burn grass and leaves? A servant of God should, therefore, maintain his purity. Criticising error in men of religion these teachers considered a duty. They felt that it was in the interest of the person whom they criticised. To leave men in error would be as wrong as to let a man cross a stream in a leaky boat.

"Can there be worship through fire to a God made of wood?  
Or do you cross the river in flood in a boat made of mud?  
If I see error I shall expose it."

Like Basavanna, the other teachers also speak of religiousness which does not touch life in good humoured banter. Men are prepared to make offerings to God in the abstract, but not to the men of God who need the offering. When a devotee sees a stone-made serpent she pours milk on it. When a live serpent comes she says, 'kill, kill'. When God who can eat comes for food she drives him away, denying food. To the image of stone which cannot eat she offers food and says, 'eat, eat'. Of those who struggle in worship, forgetting the essentials, the teachers speak in the same strain as Basavanna. The weak of heart who rise early and go trembling with the cold and mutilate the flower and shrubs and tree get nothing but sin from

this trembling. They should tremble rather at thought of another's money, another's woman, of cruelty, falsehood, theft and lust. Of those, who make offerings to God and ask for return in the shape of earthly favours, the teachers are very impatient. What is it that man can call his and offer to God as not His? Men pour water on the *Linga* and ask for good. How are they entitled for a return? It is due to the well. They put leaf and flower on God and ask for good. How is the return due to them? It is due to the trees. What, asked Allama, shall I say to these wholly wicked creatures who give God what already is His and ask in return for benefits?

The service of the man without devotion will not be accepted by God's servant. The margosa fruit suits crows, but cannot be eaten by cuckoos. God's servants should not accept alms from such men. Those who take alms from an unworthy donor are mean dependents of a ruffian and plunderer. They would not themselves rob, but would share in the gains of robbery.

"If God's servants take alms from a person who has earned wealth by foul means it is like the jackal eating what the tiger has left of its prey."

The sayings of the saints indicate a high conception of the worth of this body as an instrument for realization. One of them says that his coming to the world and finding human shape is like the labourer going for wages and finding a treasure trove. But though human life is thus highly desirable this is not on account of the pleasures that the body can yield. The pursuit of pleasure is inconsistent with the higher



purpose of life. He who delights through the body cannot delight in God. He who delights in God cannot have delight in the body. But flesh is weak. Like building the floor of the house, placing bandicoots underneath, said one of the teachers, has become the manner of this body. In making it God placed lust, anger, desire and self-love within. Another of them says that if God took human form, He would have the same difficulty as His devotees had.

“Whoever has a body hungers; whoever has a body tires. Remember that I am a being with a body and do not blame me nor punish me. If you like, wear a body like me and see, Ramanatha.”

But the difficulty can be overcome partly by effort and partly by God's grace. The essential part of the process is to long for the better life. If the mind is given to God, the problem is solved. As the sun is at the root of all activity in nature the mind is at the root of all the activity of the senses. Each man has but one mind. If that mind is fixed in God where is the evil for him thereafter? When a man has learnt this secret of self-mastery the body is a safe tenement for the soul. If you can remove the serpent's teeth, you can play with it thereafter. When you cannot do it, the body is like the mother turned monster. Those to whom God has become gracious, said Sister Mahadevi, know not their body. Self-mastery does not, however, mean necessarily renunciation and self-mortification. Basavanna said this and instanced others. Allama instanced Basavanna himself as proving this principle. Basavanna knew women yet observed vows. He observed vows and was above desire; having been

above desire he lost his self ; Basavanna was the only one who was pure from boyhood before God. The process is one of effort and struggle. It may not be necessary actually to give up anything but one should be prepared to give up everything. The readiness is essential. Sister Mahadevi said :

“Do not think I am a helpless woman and threaten. I fear nothing at your hands. I shall live on dried leaves ; and lie on swords. Chennamallikarjuna, if you will, I shall give up both body and life to you, and become pure.”

Experience of loss and suffering or its moral equivalent, readiness to lose or suffer, are necessary for man to see the divine in his own nature. God is in our life as the oil is in the seed ; or gold in the rock ; or butter in milk ; or fire in wood ; or fragrance in flowers. He cannot therefore be seen but through stress and strain. It is not knowledge of good, nor thought of good which saves but the doing of good. *Jnana* is not enough ; *Karma* is necessary. Faith is not enough ; good works are necessary. If you think of the sun, will darkness go ? If you think of God, will birth go ? God has to appear in life for the evil to go. He appears when we *do* the right. The fire can burn but cannot move. The wind can move but cannot burn. Unless fire goes with wind it cannot go forward. The difference between work and faith is just this. Or to use another simile, seeing the right and doing it are like the co-operation of the eye and the feet. He who has both eyes and feet may progress. He cannot progress who lacks either eyes or feet.

To give the mind up to God is the source of true happiness ; Mahadeviakka said :

"Let my mind trust in you; let my mind rest in you; let my mind save in you; let my mind lose in you; let it moan in you; let it tire in you; let my mind melt in you; let it grieve in you; let my five senses, like camphor placed in fire, be merged in you, my Chennamallikarjuna."

Life to such a person is one long experience of the divine. When the body has become God's form whom else shall he serve? When the mind has become God's form on whom else shall he meditate? When life has become God's form whom else shall he worship? When perception has become one with God whom else shall he know? As God will then become everything, the devotee perceives Him alone. As a Vaishnava Saint of the Tamil country said, the eye that has seen God sees nothing else. And such a man is finally saved. Allama said that he had seen those who devoted themselves to several things and were destroyed but those who devoted themselves to God and were destroyed he had not seen. Devotion to God is however tested by life. Basavanna's sayings bear testimony to this. Another devotee spoke of the process in somewhat different words. God makes his servants beg. He tries them as they try gold on the touch-stone. He reduces them as they reduce sandalwood; and crushes them as they crush sugarcane. If they fear not and are firm, Ramanatha takes them by the hand and lifts them up Himself. Men of the world are likely to laugh at the devotee. If he gives up gold they will say he is destitute. If he gives up woman they will say he is a eunuch. If he speaks truth they will call him rough-tongued. If he utters words of peace they will say it is from fear. But he has to go his way unaffected by the world's jeers.

Vows of various kinds are not necessary for religious living and are of no use. Allama said that those who take the vow to live on milk would be born as cats, those whose vow is to eat pulse would be born as horses, those vowing to live on flowers would be born as bees, and those vowing to live on water as frogs. Those whose vow is not devotion our Guheswara will not approve. Nor need men who have accepted religion go on pilgrimage. Having milk why search for cream? Wearing God's symbol why go to sacred places? Sister Mahadevi said that the yard of God's servant's dwelling is holier than Benares.

Caste does not come from birth but from character and it is wrong to keep a man at a distance on account of his birth. Good conduct, said a devotee, is high caste. Bad conduct is out-caste. Allama said that he who cannot eat with you cannot cook for you; he who cannot cook for you cannot come to your house; he who cannot come to your house cannot come to your mind; he who cannot come to the mind cannot come to serve God with you. No one should therefore pretend that there could be partial untouchability.

Many of the sages describe their love of God in terms of human love. The best of these sayings are of Sister Mahadevi. She tells Chennamallikarjuna that she has done penance for ages praying that He should marry her. They smeared the holy ashes on her face and tied the vow-string to her wrist so that she should be His. On a seat of emerald with buntings of gold, pillars of diamond and canopy of pearl, tying ropes of pearl and ruby all round, her people

married her to her Chennamallikarjuna. They married her to Him with vow-string round the wrist and blessing eternal union. She tells her friend with pride that her lover, the beautiful formless One, knows not death nor diminution. She has fallen in love with the beautiful One who knows no place, yet is everywhere but cannot be seen. "Listen to me mother, I love the birthless, formless, beautiful One; the landless, casteless, boundless One. Chennamallikarjuna is therefore the only male. These others who die and change, I will have none of them." She tells Chennamallikarjuna that she remembers Him as the elephant separated from its herd and taken captive remembers its native hills or as the parrot housed in a cage remembers the old companion of the days of freedom. The four quarters of the day she lives in thought of Him. The four quarters of the night she lives in pain of separation from Him. Day and night alike she has lain unconscious yearning for Him. Gripped with love of Him she has given up food and drink and sleep. This separation was the more absurd because He was always near. If He had gone to this place and that, she would not complain. But if He stayed in hand and mind and would not speak, how should she bear His silence?

"I have bathed and rubbed on turmeric and have worn apparel of gold. Come my lover, come my jewel of good fortune; your coming is to me the coming of my life. Come, Oh come.

"I have been gazing up the path and thirsting with hope that Chennamallikarjuna would come. Now I take hold of Cupid's feet; now I supplicate humbly to the moon. Cursed be separation. Whom shall I go and beg? As

my Chennamallikarjuna does not accept me, I have become a suppliant before everyone, my Sister."

She tells her sister that her perturbed heart has lost all balance. The cooling breeze is as fire to her and moonlight burns like Sun. She begs her to go and tell Him of her condition and bring her Chennamallikarjuna. Elsewhere she asks all creation to tell her where her lover is:

"Oh parrots singing so joyously, do you know, do you know? Swans playing on the margin of the lake, do you know, do you know? Oh cuckoos who lift up your voices and sing, do you know, do you know? Oh peacocks playing in hill and valley, O are you aware where my lover Chennamallikarjuna is. I pray you, tell me."

This is the very ecstasy of love and Mahadeviakka felt it for her God. Another saint talking of God as lover says that his lover is not like others. All the world is His beloved. He is wonderful. He unites with each as each desires. Another thinks of his being as God's beloved, his body having ceased to be his. The world called him man but he was not one. "This form is yours. The formless one within is myself. The outer man's form being you, the inner woman being myself, I am your queen, O Invisible."

God saves us or should save us not because we are good but in spite of our offending Him and because He is merciful. If the sandalwood is cut and a piece is rubbed, does it say 'I am hurt' and cease to be fragrant? If gold is taken, cut, rubbed and heated, does it lose lustre? If sugarcane is cut and given to the mill and the juice is heated, does it say 'I am injured,' and refuse to be sweet? Not all the evil that man may do will make God cease from mercy.

It is stated and it is true that God accepts no ablutions from those whose body is not under control; nor flowers from those whose mind is not disciplined; that He accepts no incense from those whose heart is not pure; nor gifts from persons whose thought, word and deed are not one. He loves not to stay in those in whom love has not blossomed. "Yet what did you find in me that you are come and are abiding in me? Tell me, Chennamallikarjuna."

To one who has tasted the bliss of God nothing else is worthwhile. Thrown back from realisation one of the saints asks where is the pleasure of the world and where is beatitude? Where is darkness and where is light? God dwelt in his heart and appeared and disappeared. What conjuror's trick was this? Having taught him the taste of milk and sugar, if He made him eat of the margosa could he like it? Having given him taste of the bliss in Him, if God left him to the world's pleasures would the devotee's heart consent? Why play with the devotee? "I will have none of these. Understand me and protect me, I pray you, my true teacher, my omnipotent Siddalingeswara." Another in words very like those of Basavanna asks God why He gave her birth in unworthy births and placed her in the world's fearful life. Why did He take no pity on her? "Tell me, tell me, my God. What have I done to deserve this? If you say you have looked after me and put me off, do you think I shall let you go? Oh Sambhu Jakkeswara."

The state of realisation is described by several of the saints. Allama says that just as to the river that flows the whole of its body is feet, to the fire that

burns the whole of its body is tongue and to the wind that blows all its body is hands, just so to God's saints the whole of their self is God's self. If a man becomes clear within himself and sees he will realise that there is nothing else. This power is within each man. If he can keep from other thought and be awake within the self and see, he will find that Guheswara is pervading him. To a man who knows himself his reason is his teacher, his self is his God's symbol, his vow is the object of service. Another devotee describes the state in the following words:

"You have entered into me, I have entered into you. There is no God but you, and but me there is no devotee. Who else can be like this? For me, you are destiny. For you I am destiny. Why have any more pretence, O God of the Universe, dear unto Urilinga Peddie?"

And another says that when mind has mingled with mind and friendship has grown, each friend thinks of the other and they cease to be strangers to each other. Each friend knows this. Just so when the soul has mingled in God it will be inseparate from him as gold and its colour. How thereafter could there be separateness?

The man who has realised bears with the world. What is the use, asks Mahadeviakka, of fearing animals having built a house on the hill? Or of fearing the wave and the foam having built a house by the sea? Or having built a house where the fair meets, what is the good of objecting to noise? Having been born in this world he should not be moved by praise or blame but bear both with equanimity. And to such a man goodness is more than kinship:



"What if they are brother and cousin and great grandfather and kinsmen? Those who are not yours, I shall not consider as mine. Devotion to kin is uttermost hell."

The man of realisation sees God everywhere and cannot think of hurting anyone or anything :

"The one has become the five elements. The sun and moon, Oh God, are they not your body? I stand up and see; you fill the world. Whom, then, shall I injure? Oh Ramanatha!"

This brief summary of the sayings of the Virasaiva saints will have made it clear that the Virasaiva movement touched the root of the people's conscience and fed it with the water of life. Thought of right and wrong, examination of one's self and an effort to live righteously became common among its followers. Thus it is that many of these saints came from the common people. We need not be afraid of the phrase "common people," in this context. It merely means persons whose pursuits were not particularly learned or religious. The saints were men and women going about the ordinary business of life, earning their bread and looking after wives and children. Yet when touched by the teaching of a great faith they evolved in the commonplace circumstances of their lives a spiritual consciousness that might not come with years of mere learning. How common the pursuits of these people were is worth noting. Ittappaiya was an umbrella-holder; Chennaiya an out-caste and shoe-maker; Machideva was a washerman; Sangaiya was a huntsman; Muddaiah a cultivator; Kamideva was talwar or watchman; Kamappa had an oil mill; cowherd Ramanna, Kethaiya the

mat-weaver, Somavve who lived by pounding rice for wages, Maraiya the fire-wood seller, Basavanna the door-keeper, Bemanna the artisan, are among them. Equally remarkable is the number of women whose sayings are recorded. Ganganibike, wife of Basavanna, and the wives of Maraiya, the fuel-seller referred to above, of Konde Manchanna and of Urilinga Peddie, other devotees who themselves recorded their experience, are here. Mahadeviakka, many of whose sayings have appeared, is easily the equal in point both of experience and expression of any woman who devoted her life to God. Muktayakka, Remmavve, Kalavve, another Remmavve and another Kalavve, Rechavve, Gangamma, Sister Nagayi, Neelambike, Bontha Devi, another Kalavve, Rekamma, Goggavve, Masamma, Thayamma, Guddavve, Sathyakka, Remamma and Suvarna Devi are other names of women who made these sayings.

The sayings cover all phases of spiritual life. Here are words on the pervasiveness of God, on the difficulty of knowing the godhead, on the absurdity of claiming to have known the Unknowable as there is no knower when one has known Him, and on the inadequacy of a theory of the godhead like absolute monism. Here is acknowledgment of the gifts of God, of the real and ultimate value of life on earth. Here is ridicule of worshipping an image as God or of relying on the symbol of the godhead, divorced from thought of what it means, to save. Wholehearted condemnation of worldliness delighting in the pleasures of the senses, hoarding for wife and child, covering its shame with appearance of devotion and

godliness, is found here. Here also is found, along with the condemnation of evil in others, confession of the evil in one's self, of the little darkness that lurks unnoticed within because the light of God is not accepted fully. Faith in the ultimate success of goodness and the trust in God that refuses to be shaken by trial are found here. Love for all creation because at the heart of it all is One; and patience with the world and its ways because that is how it is made; and with the body and its weaknesses because that is how the body is made; these are also found in these sayings. The beautiful conception of the love of God as a transcendental prototype of the love of man and woman finds utterance in many of these sayings. The utterance is sweetest in the words of Sister Mahadeviakka. In short, all the many moods of man's heart and mind in the presence of the godhead, in the approach to realisation, the struggle upward and the falling back are expressed here with the simplicity and directness that come of actual experience.

The Virasaiva movement made a great experiment. In revulsion from a dead formalism which seems to have been the prevailing feature of popular religion in those days, it emphasised the share of the mind and the heart in anything worth the name of religion and invited all people to realisation. As the inevitable consequence of its conception of the godhead it ignored difference of sex and difficulties of caste. It threw open the doors of religious life to all and refused to recognise the priestly class as a necessary intermediary between man and God. It is true that it did not move the whole nation from the

## *THE VIRASAIVA MOVEMENT*

established paths and that even in the part which it succeeded in moving into the new path it effected only partial change. It is also true that caste, though condemned in theory and in great part in practice, persisted in the community and that in later days the followers of the faith have clung to distinctions which that institution implies and fosters. Also a new priestly class took the place of the old priestly class with the drawbacks that go with such a class. In spite of all this the experiment made by the movement should be said to have been successful. Single-minded devotion to a great teacher is a characteristic of a great part of the Virasaiva community even to-day. Equality as between various castes within the fold is another important characteristic and a large measure of freedom enjoyed by women another. As the result of the protestant origin of the faith and of the sense of equality among the groups included within it, the community has developed praiseworthy devotion to common interest and remarkable solidarity in the face of common opposition. The Virasaivas of the Karnataka country show to-day a social system, a way of life and a type of culture of which almost any community may well be proud. And this nearly a thousand years after their great teacher disappeared from the world.

#### 4. THE HARIDASA MOVEMENT: PURANDARADASA

ANOTHER movement that has played a great part in moulding the culture of the Karnataka is the Haridasa movement. The twelfth century seems to have been a time of spiritual upheaval in South India. Ramanujacharya who systematised southern Vaishnavism did his work in the Tamil and Karnatak countries a little before the beginning and in the earlier years of that century. Basavanna led the Virasaiva movement in the Karnatak shortly after this. Not long after came Madhwacharya in western Karnatak. While various classes dissatisfied with existing social conditions and religious institutions could throw in their lot with reformers like Basavanna, there must have been a great mass of people to whom also change seemed desirable, but who were not prepared to leave the pale of orthodoxy for getting it. Movements therefore arose which slackened the bonds of social custom and religious ceremonial without asking people to go outside the bounds of orthodoxy. The Haridasa movement was the Karnatak analogue of such movements.

Like all movements which have tried to take religion to the common people, the Haridasa movement laid stress upon the devotional aspect of religion and relied upon the vernacular for carrying on its propaganda. It also developed an order of preachers called 'Haridasas,' meaning servants of Hari or Vishnu, the highest idea of godhead as they conceived it. These people received initiation from a teacher in the main tenets of their creed, the substance of which was that

God was a personal being, faultless, full of good qualities, merciful and watchful of the welfare of all creation; and that He would save all who acknowledged Him in their life. Naturally the creed discounted ritual and ceremonial. It discountenanced the worship of many Gods and the sacrifice of life in worship of the godhead. It disapproved of astrology and horoscopy, and emphasised reliance on God's mercy. It distinguished between community by birth and community by quality, declaring that a man's inner being was of more consequence than the social circumstances of his birth or growth. The Haridasa movement was thus really a reform movement and its programme was the same in essentials as the programme of the Virasaiva movement. Only it did not specifically break away from existing institutions but tried rather to modify them in the direction in which salvation appeared to lie. Hundreds of preachers of the movement went about the country with the message of liberation, singing psalms of wisdom and religious experience and preaching God from door to door.

The first of the Haridasa is said to have been one Narahari Tirtha. He was perhaps the first to express in a song in the vernacular his feelings in relation to God and life. The next important name in the tradition is that of Vyasaraṇa. Next after his is that of Purandaradāsa. Purandara is easily the greatest of the Haridasas. He is so great that to most people his predecessors are not even names; and all other Dasas except one—Kanakadāsa—are merely disciples. Purandaradāsa seems at first to have been wealthy and to have lived a life of luxury and ease, unwilling to

share his wealth with the poor. He had a wife who was very pious and devout. The story is told that God took mercy on him and came once in the disguise of a poor Brahmana and asked alms of him. Purandara refused. Then the Brahmana went to the wife. Fearing lest her husband should know, she gave him a small trinket which had come to her from her mother. The beggar took the trinket to the husband for sale immediately. The latter suspected that the trinket should have been given by his wife and went home vexed and angry and asked for it. The wife went in as if to bring it and did not know what to do. In great distress she thought of taking poison, when the trinket dropped into her hand. She took it and showed it to her husband. He wondered that it should be with her and looked for it where he had kept it and found it was gone. This miracle opened his eyes and he renounced property and became God's minstrel. Tradition says nothing further about Purandaradasa's religious experience. From the songs he has sung we can gather that, though renunciation came, realisation did not come immediately, that men doubted and distrusted him and often treated him badly, and thought lightly of him as an ignorant person. This hurt him at first, but years of suffering seem to have brought him peace of mind. This appears from what must have been songs of his last days. The intervening period however was obviously one of strenuous ascent. It is proposed in this essay to give an idea of the spiritual experience of Purandaradasa and a brief outline of the wisdom which found expression in his songs.

Purandaradasa strikes the keynote of the Haridasa rule of life in a song of admission of human weakness and surrender to God. "So without end are my faults, my master," he says, "I have not the tongue even to sue for pardon." Pride of good feeding, pride of wealth, pride of much possession; pride of early youth and comely shape, pride of power, pride of land, and pride that there is none to equal him, in all this pride, he had lost the tongue even to sue for God's pardon. Over-much love of wife and of children and over-much love of father and mother, over-much love of brother and friend and excessive devotion to king, love of cattle and calf and love of a host of relatives, in all this love he had forgotten to love God the slayer of evil. When he got so much he wanted so much more and when he got that much he wanted still so much more; he had lived a life of struggle and had loved to own and hold, and clung to a life that was lost even as it was held. He says elsewhere, describing how we are engrossed by life, that he did not think of God in the day because of hunger and thirst nor in the night because of sleep; so subject to the dominion of these two had he become. Complete surrender is expressed in the following piece:

"I have approached your feet, O Venkataramana, my God of the loving and lotus-like eyes and abode of all that is good. I am a waif, my God, and you are my one refuge; take pity on me of your grace and look on me as your own. Think not of my failing, my God, you who sleep on the serpent, O Great One! You look after whole nations; even so look after me. Sleeper on the serpent, Lord of mercy, Great Hayavadana."

He argues and asks in another piece if parents give



up the children they have borne and cease to look after them because the children are silly. "If I your servant am ignorant may you, Lord, leave me without protection? Tell me Purandara Vittala!" "I shall not let go of your feet," he says in another piece, "whatever you do I shall cling to you, for yours is the task of taking me across."

The state of mind of the devotee when he has given up the way of the world as no way for him, and has not felt the assurance of realisation, is described by Purandaradasa in vivid metaphor in a well-known song. He had not found the nest nor the track that led to it. Run away were both wives, and the walls of the house had fallen and its place was empty. Alas, he had missed here nor ate there porridge and ghee. Like the pot of ghee dropping a-sudden on the dung-hill had been his life. He felt great distress but awoke not within. Like a ball of jaggery falling into fire and being reduced to ashes had life been. Peace in God was gone nor knew he what luxury was in store for him in future. His mind had forsaken thought of the eternal Lord and had become barren. He cries in one place that he is as the insect that has fallen into the fire and begs God to take him out and save him. He asks God why He had dragged him into this world. Why could He not look after him in heaven, why did He give him birth? Elsewhere the same mood finds even fuller expression. That God was merciful he was somehow not quite sure, seeing that He was giving this body again and again and was making him wander and was trying him so. He had been told that God saved in the past, beasts of the field and men and

women, good and bad. He had thought of this and had pondered and pondered and it all looked like so much fable. If God really were merciful let Him come and hold His devotee by the hand and save him. If He were propitious would bad impulses torment the devotee? It was said that He had been gracious to a devotee at the hour of death, coming to his side as on the wings of a bird. Much praise had He had in the past. Would He keep it? Then let Him come and save His servant Purandaradasa.

When in the course of spiritual ascent he feels weaker than usual, Purandaradasa cries out to God and says that this abandonment was not right. To have sowed and raised a crop and when it had grown to leave cattle to graze it; to have spent a thousand gold pieces and got a house and now to set fire to it; to have painted with colours a fine picture and now to throw mud and ink on it; to have reared the parrot and taught it speech and now to give it to the cat; to have raised him and to drop him. This was not right. "O Lord, be merciful." Again:

"Knowing all and aware of all, may you forsake me thus? O Lotus-eyed, O Great One, O God! I have no friends, life holds no pleasure for me, I have suffered from calumny, kind One; you are father and mother, you are brother and friend; and always I have trusted in you, Krishna.

"The moments have become as ages and I have become lighter than straw; I have suffered in countless births. Thou, worshipped of sages, and Creator of the world's creator, Sleeper on the serpent, Saviour of Prahlada, Krishna.

"Having assumed the title of Protector of devotees, should not you be at hand to them? O you, who liberate man,

my God, Purandara Vittala, I have trusted in you as competent to save."

What actually the experience was that wrung this kind of cry from him we do not know but it finds even more poignant utterance elsewhere.

God was to Purandaradasa's mind almost a human master. He says that for His own prestige He should save His servants. "I may have devotion or I may not. The good, however, call me your servant. See to it now that people shall not say that a servant of God was dragged down by the powers of death." This prayer of Purandaradasa was heard and He who is competent to save all souls saved his and we hear in songs of what must have been a later day a more hopeful note and finally assurance of salvation.

"When I am dwelling in thought of you, what harm can wicked men do to me?

"What will they do to me being evilly disposed towards me, when you, Eternal One, are looking after me? All the moments of life I live in thought of you. Will ants besiege a fire?

"If a horse makes a rush to show off speed will the dust it raises besiege the sun? To men who can endure no harm can come. Will the hill shake for the wind?

"If the thief sees a purse in the mirror and makes a hole in the mirror to get it, will it become his? I have placed my trust in you. O Purandara Vittala, save me."

"Come what will," he says elsewhere, "only let us have our Lord's grace. Who says I am poor and who says I am friendless. Nay, I am neither while I have you, my God. To him who can pray to God, here is Heaven and here He is present with His angels."

Thus convinced himself Purandaradasa preached his faith to others. He told men that to please God should be their one object in life; the pleasing of others is a secondary matter. The harm that any one can do to us being angry with us is little. The good they can give becoming propitious is of no value. Can the dog bite the man who is riding on the elephant? While God, the refuge of the humble and meek, is with His servant, what will anyone do to him being angry? Purandaradasa makes it clear, however, that it is no small matter to become God's servant. That service is not for men of the world, for it implies giving up the evil in oneself and living in thought of the Deliverer. The dirt within must go; one should hear constantly of the works of God; one should be at peace. One should know the heart of the righteous and meek and without intermission think of God's feet. One should hold in control the bodily senses and the faculties of mind and gain knowledge; should endure prosperity and decline and bear oneself humbly; should consider as equal honour and disgrace and ponder on and sing the greatness of God. One should realise that God pervades everything, is everything, is at the heart of everything, and call on God continually, and think on that source of holiness continually and not feel self-complacent. All this is not easy. So far a beginning, man may well serve God's servants.

"To become your servant is the fruit of the accumulated merit of how many lives! O Bright and Merciful God, Eternal Source of Good, grant me in fulness the service of your servants."

Failure in the world is not necessarily failure in the highest purpose of life. If men will not have you,

they may be merely turning you on to God. Of his own experience Purandaradasa said that people laughed and scoffed at him and left him God's name, they broke and choked him and cured him of useless hope, they tried him and wearied him and rid him of desire and anger. By much teasing they showed him the way to realisation. They treated him as a life dedicated to God ; they would have nothing to do with him. Elsewhere he said :

"Who that trusted you has prospered, my God? Listen!  
If a man accepts you he cannot get even a handful of grain as alms."

Men of the world are a prey to anxiety. Their soul is ever anxious, until it gives its mind to God. It is anxious if there is a wife, anxious if there is none, anxious if the wife is foolish, or if the wife is prettier than other women it is anxious from overmuch love of her. It is anxious if there are children, anxious if there are none; anxious that they will cry and ask for food. Even if a man is tending cattle to get his bread, his mind is anxious about a hundred strange things. It is anxious if one is poor, anxious if one is rich, anxious if one has a handful of gold hoarded. There is one way out of this anxiety and that is to trust in God and not waver. There is no one who trusted in God and lost. If anyone did not believe and lost, it was his fault. Why say I am ruined and grieve? Why trouble others for food for our hunger? He who gave us birth will not let us eat grass. Whether you are in hill or forest, Purandara Vittala is sure to protect you. Rather than waste your time in this useless worry, examine your mind

every day, take count of the good and the evil piling up, separate right and wrong, and cut the root of the impulses leading to wrong, walk in righteousness and bear God's beauteous feet in your heart, resist the body and win once for all, conquer the mind and see God. Then are you wise in heart, and then salvation is within a span of you, not far. God's devotees are safe from danger. But He consorts not with those who revel in wickedness. "Listen all you who are good. He will give salvation to us, Purandara Vittala."

Show of orthodoxy and ceremonial purity are worthless. Those who do not give up self and desire but are orthodox and showy in worship, do it for getting food and pleasing men. Theirs is saintliness for the sake of the stomach. There is no jot of devotion to God in it. To rise early and tremble with the cold; and pride oneself on bathing in the river, while all the time the inside is full of haughtiness, envy and anger; and thus to lead people who are looking on to admire; to spread images of brass and bell-metal all around, as if it were the shop of a metal-worker; and to light many lamps that they may glitter; and worship God as with flowers of hypocrisy; prayer beads in hand and orison on tongue and cloth worn over the face as a veil, to think of another's woman and of another's money and win a name for being a great ascetic; to simulate great devotion by outward show, and make people say "There is no one equal to him"; complete in externals like a man playing a woman's part: all this is work for ensuring a meal. It is stomach-saintliness. Instead of giving up the "me and the mine" and throwing one's self on God what-

ever may come, all this which is done is ignorance of God by worldly-minded men; this is stomach-saintliness. If men have not the will to clean the mind of evil, but get up at early dawn and bathe and tremble, what good is it? The old frog which stays in water both morning and evening, what less does it do? What good comes of bathing in water a hundred times a day without the thought of God? If men understand, Truth is bathing and fasting and meditation and discipline combined; ceremony performed by the untruthful is waste. Men wash the dirt on the body but can they wash the mind by bathing in sacred water? What good does it do?

Knowledge as a load of information, and knowledge which does not improve life are worthless. What is one's knowledge if one does not know himself? What use is the repetition of a formula if the mind is not pure?

Man's worst enemies are within. "I fear not fire nor prison nor do I fear for my body. I fear not snake or scorpion nor the edge of the sword; one thing only I fear, one I dread within; other's money, other's woman—these two I fear; I remember Kaurava and Ravana and what happened to them and pray Save me from Evil, Purandara Vittala."

To men claiming godliness but not worthy of reverence he was harsh; they said they knew everything; but had not given up evil; they were apparently telling stories of saints; but in fact talked improprieties; they wore sack cloth but had not given up desire; they observed vows and discipline but had not given up darkness; they said they were wise but

had not given up the self ; they performed sacrifices but had not given up untruth ; they had not conquered pride yet, and fallen in surrender at the feet of the Lord Purandara Vittala. To men striving for recognition as wise or important, he said, " Say not, friends, I am bigger, I am bigger. There is only One who is big—our Purandara Vittala."

He told the learned that wrangling about God's nature is useless. That He is all-powerful and all-pervading is all that we can say. " Thus is God. So is God. Let me tell you how He is." He has no feet but makes all move ; He has no hands but makes all hold ; He has no teeth but makes all chew ; He has no stomach but makes all eat ; He has no ears but makes all hear ; unseen, He pervades within, without. From Him comes all. He is all that men have thought He is. And Purandaradasa saluted God's form of Creator and His form of Destroyer ; His form of the King of the Gods and His form of the Moon ; His form of moveless life and His form of moving life. He saluted in fact God's form as manifest in all creation. It is useless to try to describe God adequately by language meant for the world's life. The Infinite cannot be encompassed so. He can be an atom, He can be a world ; He can be both at once. He can be form, He can be formless ; He can be formless form ; He can be manifest, He can be latent ; He can be both in one ; He can have qualities, He can be quality-less ; He can be the two together. The impossible is possible to God's power. Unthinkable and wondrous is the greatness of Purandara Vittala.

Purandaradasa said again and again that his



school was not the Advaita school of philosophy. God is ever Lord and man is His servant. They misled the world who gave the teaching, "I am He". The messengers of Purandara Vittala taught instead the secret, "I am His servant". This teacher repudiated certain descriptions of God current among clever people as that God is non-existence, unmoving and such others. God is at the heart of everything and he who says He is nothing is the murderer of eternal life. He is the power moving everything; he who says He is unmoving is the thief of well-being.

In another piece he uses an *Upanishad* figure to show the relation between the individual soul and the Universal Soul. The two cannot be the same, the two can never become one. There are two birds in one nest, and on the same tree; one of them eats the fruit, the other does not eat the fruit; the one flies from branch to branch; the other does not. The one knows many things; the other knows not those many things. The one moves from branch to branch and rises beyond the heights and rising joins Purandara Vittala and there rests in bliss.

All Nature is obeying God's law as is said in the *Upanishads*:

"The earth fears and the hills and the rivers and the sea;  
They all fear you and keep their places;  
The wind fears you and moves and the fire fears you and  
burns;

The trees and creepers yield fruit;

O Purandara Vittala, what a King are you!"

A good man does not necessarily desire to leave the world of work. Only, he wishes to be always serving God within. "O Lord of all that is good,

grant me but this: That I shall ever live the inner life in you." Life is of value only as an opportunity to serve God. "It is nothing very much, this life of a few days. Know this and give in charity and do good." Man has an opportunity of rising denied to beasts. He should make use of the opportunity;

"Birth as a human being is a great opportunity. Do not misuse it, O silly, O foolish ones. Garner merit before the raid. Be not caught in the whirl of false living."

He asks people to remember that God's mercy alone stands. Life in the world is fleeting. Build tanks, raise groves, relieve people in distress. Give food to those who come to the house asking for it and win heaven.

Man must have patience with the world and go through with life showing, however, no weakness through self and attachment. You must swim across, yea, you must fight through life and win. Being unattached to self and desire, loving life as the water on the lotus-leaf loves the leaf and singing always that Rama is Lord, those who would have the soul's desire should swim and win.

In another piece Purandaradasa preaches patience with fault-finders and kindness in return for unkindness. He asks men to realise the secret of the text that right alone succeeds and act wisely; to him who gives poison to give sweet and tasty food; to serve him who hates; to praise and oblige him who reviles falsely; and if a man deceives, to give his name to their son and honour him and all the while sing the glory of Lotus-eyed Purandara Vittala and realise the purpose of life.

He told men inclined to think of astrology and horoscopy that trust in God was the real astrology and horoscopy. To call on Hari is the strength of the auspicious hour; to call on Hari is the strength of a good asterism and of the moon. Again; "You are the strength of all the planets, O Lotus-eyed One. You are the saviour of all, pervading all."

Caste is not a mere matter of birth; it is in character. Do you see the outcaste only outside the village? Is there no outcaste within? For there are men who are outcastes by their character. He is an outcaste, he says, who has learnt but does not impart learning; who being a servant defies his master; who owns but does not give in charity; who borrows but is unwilling to repay; who talks scandal and spreads it abroad; who sows discord between husband and wife; who raises hopes and breaks his promise; who forgets help received, however small; who sees injustice but will not cure it; who decries others and praises his self; who does not worship Purandara Vittala. Are there outcastes only outside the village? Is there no outcaste within?

The doctrine of *Karma* is preached fervently in many of the songs. One of the most familiar says: "that a man has thought on God with devotion, is borne out by his words coming true; that he gave food to others, by his getting good food to eat."

Purandaradasa gives a new meaning to sacrifices. What we should slay in sacrifice is our bad qualities. This is a familiar way of weaning people from the lower forms of worship.

We cannot please God by what we are. We please Him by acknowledging Him. What is it that we can take as gift to Him? With what shall we please Him, Lord of the humble? He should give to us rather the thought of Him.

Man should not put off the impulse to rise. He should use it when it comes. Winnow the corn when the wind is blowing. Say not "to-morrow". Now is the time; come. God is gracious and is ever more ready with His mercy than man with devotion. He will carry grass to the house of those who bring Him flowers. He has no pride at all, the Lord of all wealth.

Purandaradasa was what in modern parlance should be called a mystic. It appears from his story that he was a man of strong impulses and will. When he was of the world he was heartily of it; when he awoke from worldliness he reacted strongly and gave up the world altogether. He felt near to God and yet far and passed some time on the swing of faith, feeling his unworthiness keenly, and slowly realising the mercy of God. This is the story of all strong natures which start in the world's race and feel pulled towards God in the middle of it. Purandaradasa did not write reminiscence. If he had, we should have had a book like St. Augustine's *Confessions*, or Mahatma Gandhi's story of his life. Self-revelation of this kind was not the tradition of his time. All experience was expected to contribute to the joint wisdom of the country. Utterance was restricted in all cases to general observation confirming or modifying accepted wisdom. Yet Purandaradasa put enough

of himself into his songs to give them the colour of his personality. In the songs which he obviously composed late in life we see how near God was to his heart. There is here the suggestion of that peace of the soul that no words can describe.

The songs of Purandaradasa are not all subjective. Many of them seem to have been suggested by occurrences in the world around him. They indicate a mind familiar with the world and its ways and inclined as much to see without as within. Wide knowledge, deep experience, and a great love of humanity are visible in them. Their range is great. Men of many types will find something in him to satisfy. The songs preach no mere renunciation. Life in the world but life in thought of God is what they teach. They warned the prosperous ones of his generation against thinking too much of the pleasures of the body and material success and to the needy and destitute gave the message that they need not despair. God still was father to all and misfortune might only be His way of calling them to Himself. His teaching so appealed to the people of his and succeeding generations that he is still the Servant of Hari that men remember best. The centuries that have passed since he sang have only fixed him more and more firmly in popular respect, and even now if any one sings a Kannada hymn, ten to one it is a hymn composed by Purandaradasa. If it makes no parade of cleverness, uses the simplest word and goes direct to the heart with the meaning, then it is no one else's; it can be only his.

## 5. THE HARIDASA MOVEMENT: OTHER DASAS

PURANDARADASA is the most important figure among Haridasas, but like Basavanna among the Sivasaranas he was one of a large group of like-minded people. Narahari Tirtha, the reputed originator of the movement, and Kanakadasa—believed to have been a contemporary of Purandaradasa—have been mentioned earlier. Well-known successors of these are Vijayadasa, Jagannathadasa and Gopaladasa. Other singers are named in the tradition and pieces attributed to them occasionally sung. Some songs of these teachers have to be studied to get an idea of the work of the group.

The following pieces are from a song composed by Narahari Tirtha. It is probably the first he composed. The sentiment and expression are worthy of the beginner of the Haridasa movement.

"In words I have been God's servant, and greatly learned in discourse; the mind has, however, loved money and worldly pleasure and wronged God and the teachers and felt no fear.

"As the years have passed I have grown more covetous and am loading myself with error; I have gathered stone and shell like a child and given up the shield of life.

"For whom is it, soul, that you are so anxious? For whom do you hoard this wealth? Wife and children, friend and others, none of them will go with you when you leave the world.

"For giving in charity a pie has been a thousand; for improper expenditure a crore has been a pie; in doing good you have felt no interest, in doing evil awake and active.

"Call on God to whom all creation submits and give up the enemies within the self; call on Him whom all righteous men worship, the Lord of all good, the King of the Universe."

Kanakadasa was a shepherd by birth, became a disciple of the same Vyasarayya who probably was Purandaradasa's preceptor and was held in great respect by his teacher and friends. Some stories are told of this saint which suggest that his rise in the preceptor's favour was not quite pleasing to persons who were conscious of their superior caste. One story states that the preceptor wanted to teach the grumblers a lesson and one day in open assembly called to him some of these men as well as Kanakadasa and gave each a plantain with the direction that they should eat it where they would not be seen. They all went out and came back later, Kanaka last. Kanaka brought the fruit intact. The others had eaten theirs. The preceptor asked them all what they had done. One man said that he ate his under water in a pond; one that he stood in a closed room and ate it. Thus each mentioned some place where no human eye could have seen him. Kanakadasa was asked why he did not eat the fruit. He said "I could not eat it anywhere. You told me that I should eat it unseen. Wherever I went I felt that God's eyes were on me." "See" said the teacher. "That is why Kanakadasa is better than the rest of us. We all know that God is everywhere but we do not act in realisation of the truth. He realises it and it comes out in all his actions." A tradition at Udupi runs to the effect that when Kanakadasa came to the temple to worship and

could not gain admission to the presence of the deity he went to the rear of the temple and prayed. The image in the temple turned towards him; that is, towards the wall behind which Kanakadasa stood. The people then realised how great the devotee was and made a hole in the wall so that he might have a view of the image. Another story says that one day a hungry dog came into his house and took some bread and ran out; and that his wife blamed him for looking on when bread was being taken away by a dog. Kanakadasa took some jaggery and ghee and ran after the dog calling: "O Great one, My God living in all life, eat not mere bread. Have this too." It is said that he had a vision of God on this occasion. Other stories are told to show his skill in talk and his power to worship God mentally.

Kanakadasa's songs show more subtlety than Purandaradasa's. They are more philosophical in tone. The following song of his is very familiar to people:

"This body is yours; so is the life within it; yours too are the sorrows and joys of our daily life.

"Whether sweet word or *Veda* or story or law, the power in the ear that hears them is yours; the vision in the eye that gazes lidless on beauty of young form, yea, that vision is yours.

"The pleasure that we feel in living together with fragrance of musk and sweet scents; that is yours; and when the tongue rejoices in the taste of its food, yours is the pleasure with which it rejoices.

"This body of ours and the five senses which are caught in this net of illusion, all, all is yours. O source of all desire that the body bears, is man his own master? Nay all his being is yours."



A well-known song of Kanakadasa teaches trust in God. He tells his mind not to tremble but bear up a little. God will protect all. We need have no doubt of this. To the tree that has grown on the top of the hill who made a pit and fed it with water? He who gave it birth took the burden of rearing it. The mind should know this and cease from much doubting within. Who again limned the colours on the plumes of the peacock, and splashed on the coral its scarlet hue? Who taught speech to the mellow-toned parrot? He who did all this—will he give up man? There are worm and insect living under the stones. Who brings their food there? Pray, tell who? He of the loving eyes, the Lord, ancient and eternal, He will protect all. Of this there is no doubt. The feeling of wonder which comes over us when we look into the structure of our life and thought and of nature around us is expressed by Kanakadasa in another song. Is God in *Maya* or is *Maya* in God? Is God in the body or is body in God? Is the building in space or the space in the building? Or are both space and building in the eye? Is the eye in the mind or the mind in the eye? Or are both eye and mind in Krishna? Then come lines making the same observation regarding the sugar and its sweetness and the tongue and taste and flowers and their fragrance and the sense of smell. Then says the saint:

“O Self-born and ancient Lord of Kaginele

I cannot encompass you in words. All is in you.”

In another piece Kanakadasa tells his mind to beware or it will go to ruin. The words can be addressed to

any one. Choose not evil. Hold the rod of chastisement in the hand; and use it against yourself. Be not elated at thought of body and possession; walk not the way of destruction, consort not with the wicked; fall not, fall not. Do not practise deceit and earn wages of sin; remember God, remember. Trust not property; waste not time. Do not talk evil of others and take a place in hell. Take not a place in hell. Forget not your true nature, keep your desire within limits. And forget not the beautiful and eternal Lord. Forget Him not.

Kanakadasa asks people in another song to enlist in God's service, get free of the bonds of life, and be unique. This body is not you and not yours. Desire is not proper and not eternal; it will not endure. Go not into the sea of desire, anxiety and sin; be not caught in the bonds of death. Rid yourself of sin, attain bliss. He says pilgrimages are of no use and the sacred rivers are no more sacred than we who bathe in them make of life. Kasi (Benares), Kanchi, Rameswara—what is the use of going to these and other places, what do you gain there? What good comes of living beside the sacred rivers Krishnaveni, Ganga, Godavari and Thungabhadra and fasting and bathing in them with devotion and performing ceremony and fulfilling vow? Why this exertion? Get near to the soul of all being which is within; experience good and get real release. Get strong. As Basavanna and Purandara said this teacher also said that purity was something within. A man bows a hundred times and plunges into water; yet turns his eyes to women and makes his mind prisoner to them.

His show is like filling the inside of the gourd with toddy and putting on the outside a garland and decorations of purity. Men should give up these conjuror's tricks and hold to the great name. Quell desire and approach release, taste the pleasure of the nectar of God's name and reach bliss. He remonstrates with persons speaking of castes; and tells them not to fight and asks one of the fighters what is his caste. There is no birth which he has not had, there is no land which he has not trodden, there is nothing which he has not cooked and eaten. Why then talk of caste, caste, caste? Know the truth within. Then, too, where is caste for those who know the pleasure of right life? What caste is the soul, what caste is life, what is the caste of the vital principles and the senses? Where is caste for the man whom the great God Adikesava has looked on with grace? Let a man remember Him to whom no one is stranger. Of himself, however, Kanakadasa spoke in great humility. He says in one piece:

"I have not devotion of the size of the gingelly-seed.  
I am thief amidst thieves, showy like the crane."

He advises people not to worship endless numbers of village deities and rather to give in charity and do good. Why worship Yekkanati, Yellamma, Mari, Durgi, Chowdi? When death comes to drag you, will these *Saktis* save you? Worship not the Gods of the crowd who receive sacrifices of goat, buffalo and sheep. What will one gain by missing the true God and worshipping low deities?

Vijayadasa, a successor of Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa, revived the tradition in his time. In one

piece he describes his spiritual awakening, using the figure of a sealed house opened by officers of justice. The door of his being opened that day. He knew not how he reaped this fruit that comes only of righteousness. He knew not when that door was closed and sealed. It had been the home of evil all that time. He was deceived till that day and through the mountain of darkness could not see. God's grace was the key and the teacher's mercy was the strength. In company with the servants of God he went to his being and in the name of God opened the seal. The enemies that were around fled. He went in through the door holding firmly in the hand the light of knowledge fed with devotion. What did he find? A beautiful palace all around; and there, seated on the lotus of the heart, praised by the lords of creation, served by the wealth of earth and heaven and surrounded by reflections of His being, he saw Vijaya Vittala in whom existence, knowledge and bliss are one. The simile is a little over-elaborated but the saint seems in ordinary life to have been a servant of the law and it came to him naturally. It should also have been well understood in the circle in which the song was first sung and even to us of a later day the picture has a certain grandeur.

Vijayadasa asks his soul in one place why it came into the world. Did it need to know what the world is like? Why did it leave the heavenly abode where it waited in service on God's presence? Very well, then, he says and pretends to let it have a go at life. Woman, gold and earth it says are its possession. Well let it enjoy them. But he fears that the soul may take this

seriously and says again in tones of persuasion: "Look here soul. Let by-gones be by-gones, bury the past and love God and live in thought of Him from now on." Mere knowledge and ceremony are no good, he says, in another place. Liberation comes not without realisation, come whatever else will. Read the *Veda*, study the *Shastra*, wrangle in disputation and win; without realisation liberation is not. Travel to Kasi, dwell in a forest, wear the scholar's embroidered robe on the body. Without realisation liberation is not. Practise austerities, parade your cleverness; shout the name of Vijaya Vittala Himself; without realisation liberation is not. He repeats in another piece that it does not matter where he is, the man who is not for God; even if he utters God's name without intermission, he will not reach eternal life. It matters not whether he is in God's presence or far away, the man who does not know the self. He saw men talking gossip and admonished himself against such waste of time. Men should not speak evil of another, nor talk of his conduct. What have they to do with him? Who is he and who are they to talk of him? Do they share in his sin? If he is good he will live. If he walks aright his lineage is saved. In another piece he confessed to God that he had sat in silence for meditation and shown wondrous qualities to the eyes of men but had not given up the self and had been worst of human creatures. He had not a jot either of wisdom, or unwavering faith. Nor had he given up desire. He told God who is said to meet every wish of his devotees that he had been a sinner before Him and begged Him not to remember his failings against him.

Earning livelihood by speaking of God he described in one piece as giving a ruby and taking vegetables in exchange. He urged speedy acceptance of the better life. O Mind praise God forthwith. If you fall at the feet of death's messengers do you think they will wait for you for a day? Think not always what the people will say. Think rather of your way forward. Lose not your heart to the wonder of woman's beauty. Sing of God.

Jagannathadasa is another well-known devotee. He calls on God to come and dwell with him.

"Come, O Merciful One! and stay for ever in my heart. Thou great without a second, Lord of all that is good!

"Come, O Beautiful, Gracious to devotees! Come and stay ever in the soft petals of my heart-lotus; to see your holy feet, O Merciful One, I have performed numerous austerities, observed numerous vows.

"I have given up thought of body, mind and wealth and dream always of your lotus-like feet; I have now felt the desire for you. Giver of men's desires, fulfil that desire. Delay not, I have lost my heart to you."

He says he is God's servant:

"Your servant am I, your servant am I. Your servant and ever your servant. You, dweller in all life, centre of holiness; your servant am I. O Heart of life, Giver of life, Creator of the Creator, Lord of Existence, your servant am I. Heart of time, directing time; you who are beyond time, who set time in motion, you who stop time, Master of time, Time's very form: your servant am I."

He says that to those who know the way worship of God is very easy. Those who do not know are indeed unfortunate. He asks for the company of the beneficent souls who call on God's name in delight and proceeds to describe them. They know no other

God; they forget not the benefits they have received from His grace; they do not omit to worship Him day in and day out; they have not matter for thought but it concerns Him. They appear like deaf and dumb to those who look on; they give no place in their minds to common cleverness; they take nothing that has not been consecrated to God; they need not heaven's bliss, so happy are they here. Success and failure, gain and loss, honour and disgrace, fear and hope, pain and pleasure, gold and mud, sweet and bitter, praise and blame; they take all good and evil as subject to God's sway. They see His face in all things and miss it nowhere; all that they eat and give to others they consider as service to God; they relish the taste of His name as the bee the juice of the flower; they treat wives and children as God's devotees and care for them as such. Elsewhere he tells his mind what things are worth man's while. Devote yourself to God's story. In the worship of metal and stone images there is nothing to be gained. If you bathe in many waters, you wash dirt; but you do not get real knowledge. Give up low thoughts and serve good men. In another piece he asks God why He tried this servant of His servants' servants and begs Him to give him good. This devotee's one self had not become heavy to God? The devotee's failure indeed was immeasurable and God is essentially just; but let Him not forsake the sinner on that account. Passions invested the man and he forgot God. Let not the Unchanging One, the Eternal Bliss in wisdom, look on these many and great faults, but forgive him. God has to treat the devotee as servant of His servants' servants and save him. For

He is merciful and saves man out of mere grace. He is ever great and does not forsake one who reaches out to Him. Dwelling in the heart He knows our inmost thought, the Bliss in Wisdom, who is gracious to devotees. "Wife and children, mother and father, brother and sister, whatever is mine, protect it you. None will do it but you who protect the whole world. Grant my prayer, Sleeper on the Serpent. Greatest of sinners am I, Thou beautiful One, absolver from sin : O Lord, am I not your servant ? O Universal Lord, hold me by the hand and save me."

Vasudevadasa, another well-known devotee, begged this only of God and prayed to Him to be propitious and grant it. He would take nothing else from the Knower of all. That one prayer was that he be not placed in the company of the evil-minded ; not made to beg of all and sundry ; that he be shown only the story that concerns God. He could not live a moment without God or something that concerned Him. He rejoiced to see God's servants. When he could hear of God he liked not to hear useless talk of other things. Long life without thought of God, he felt, was worthless as nothing. Living but an hour he truly lives who counts as one of God's men.

This prayer is by Gopaladasa :

"Saviour of your flock and Granter of salvation ; show me your lotus-like feet to-day ; O Beautiful, O son of Nandagopa : Saviour of the distressed, Lord of all good.

"I have been caught in the bonds of life and see not the way and am weary ; say I am your child, and forget my faults and save me O Father, Source of Desire.



"I know not the truth and have lived as a coward; and have not devoted myself to you; I have not seen you, nor sung your glory; O Graceful, I pray you save me.

"I have been a burden in the life of the world. I strayed from the path and joined evil men. There is no one to save me and I have come to you. O Magnanimous One, Sweet Musician, Father, take me across."

A large number of the songs of the Dasas relate to the story of Krishna, the individual soul being thought of as beloved of God and the love of God described in terms of human love. Some of these pieces show keen love of nature's beauty. In one the maiden waking to the love of Krishna asks her friend who it is that is playing so sweetly on the flute in *Brindavana*; holding it in his hands soft as tender leaves. The hill side, she sees, is filled with the sound and the birds have gathered round the flutist. Is it possible to go and see Krishna immediately? Who is it playing on the flute? The cows have forgotten to graze and Jumna has slowed down her pace. With cowherds tending their cows all round, who is it, so graceful and handsome playing his flute in *Brindavana*? The elder one who has known the joy of the love of God tells her it is Krishna and the Gods have shed heaven's flowers on Him. "Go and see in *Brindavana*. It is Sri Krishna in the Kadamba forest, tending cows; go and see."

Some of the songs written to describe divine love by this metaphor have forgotten that it is a metaphor. This is the dilemma of symbolic writing. A simile is taken to explain in terms of something familiar some truth that is considered abstruse. The abstruseness is indeed removed but the truth is removed with it

and the symbol remains in its place. In some of these songs the love for God is pictured as love for a paramour and the devotee's relations with the world as the relations with a husband. The symbolism was not intended to recommend improper love in the world by comparing it to divine love any more than to condemn divine love by comparing it to improper love in the world. The use, however, of the holiest of loves we know in such juxtaposition with the unholiest love introduced an element of confusion. Defenders of the metaphor will say that the fault is that of the person who misunderstands. This is no doubt true but part of the responsibility lies with those who use dubious metaphor in speaking to simple people.

We shall close with one example of later songs. The piece seems to have been written by a devotee who lived about a hundred years ago.

"I have placed full trust in You, Panduranga; shine Thou ever in the throne of my heart; Dispeller of the terror of worldly life in devotees, your mercy is your treasure, Panduranga.

"Even in the midst of the world's great throng; teach my mind to rest firmly in You; all the work I do is part of your worship; give me constantly this share in your worship.

"Overlord and God, let me constantly have the thought of your world play, Panduranga; remove my dependence on others; show me my path to the highest good.

"Alike in joy and in great sorrow, my friend be Thou, Panduranga; Life of life, Vyasa Vittala, Panduranga, let me always see the light of your countenance."

The Haridasa movement made an effort to place a complete code of morality and religion before the people. Its main object was to condemn formalism

and ritualism in religion and a too arduous pursuit of worldly prosperity. It preached instead devotion to God and recognition of spiritual values. It preached also that the better life was not meant for a few people but was meant for all and should be striven after by all. It has been sometimes said that the Dasas preached in differentism and quiescence and removed the impulse to work in the world by decrying individual effort and emphasising the doctrine of *Karma*. It is true that single lines and sometimes pieces seem to speak in this strain. Possibly, particular Dasas preach only such doctrine and no other. The accusation, however, cannot be made against the whole school. All teaching has to be understood with reference to the circumstances in which it arose. It should also be remembered that these songs are lyric and the idea in each depends on the incident which gave it birth. At a time of prosperity when addressing men who had enough to eat a teacher may well say: "Do not think your bodies are eternal. Remember you have a soul. Eating and drinking are not the whole of life." To a generation that has more hunger than food this advice not to love the world's pleasures too much naturally seems mockery. We should see that the advice was not meant for this generation. Even when it was given it was meant for the full man not the hungry one. It applies to-day to the full man. So far from preaching quiescence the songs prescribe the doing of good deeds. It may be objected that this was recommended as a means of acquiring merit and not for its own sake. The motive was suggested for the common man who could be got to do such work only

if he could gain something. Men of higher mind were asked to work for pleasing God. It is true that the teaching was not always understood and led to error in life. This, however, has happened to nearly all teaching since the world began. We do not judge a doctrine by the lives of the people who misunderstood it but of those who understood it. We judge it by what it meant to do and what at least partially it succeeded in doing.

The Haridasa tradition is still alive though not very active. As an attempt to reform orthodoxy from within we can imagine that the movement had to meet peculiar difficulties. In assessing human worth it changed the emphasis from birth to character. In preaching the greatness of the one God it condemned lower forms of worship which the orthodox religion permitted and even accepted into the fold. In placing emphasis on the meaning rather than on the language and taking the best thought to the people it touched vested interests to the quick. Mendicancy even in the name of God seemed to many somewhat of a fall from the dignity which the teachers of the people should claim. That the Haridasa movement was treated with some hostility quite early in its history is evident from the fact that Vaishnavas were soon divided into *Vyasakuta* and *Dasakuta*, meaning the Vyasa group and the Dasa group, the former relying on Sanskrit texts and older tradition, the latter on the new teaching on a reformed basis. The movement, however, has persisted in spite of opposition and mendicants of the order even now go about singing the songs of their predecessors.

## 6. WISDOM FOR AND FROM THE PEOPLE

### (i) A Popular Text-Book of Philosophy

THE Virasaiva saints began an era in the history of their mother-tongue when they made it the receptacle of their finest thoughts. The vogue grew, popular metres came into use in serious writing and a school of poetry arose addressing itself to the common man as well as to the scholar. The Haridasa movement strengthened the vogue. Numerous lives of the saints and Puranic stories came to be written in the new style and narrative verse meant for singing was also developed. Kanakadasa wrote a small book of verse which he called *Essence of Devotion*, and a song narrative called *The Stream of Fascination*, dealing with the romantic story of Krishna's grandson and the *Asura* maiden Usha. *Siva Bhakti Sara* or *Essence of Devotion to Siva*, *Harikathamritasara* or *Essence of the Nectar of Stories of Hari*, and *Anubhavamrita* or the *Nectar of Experience*, are verse treatises on devotion and religion which became very popular. The last of these came to have great vogue and may be said to have become the text-book of common philosophy. A brief account of its teaching is likely to be of general interest as showing the bent of the popular mind.

The poem was the work of one Ranganatha who had renounced the world and practised *yoga* under a preceptor. Having felt the need of an easy book in Kannada teaching the best wisdom to the people he wrote this verse treatise in the mother-tongue. The author preaches renunciation, describes the various

stages of *yoga* and covers altogether wide ground. What he is saying, he observes, is not new; he is merely repeating what the wise taught in the past. While claiming no credit for originality for himself he finds it necessary to warn the reader against neglecting his teaching. "Do not make light of what I say because it is Kannada. To superior persons who would do so I shall say this in reply. A mirror is indicated by different words in Kannada and Sanskrit. The words are different but they refer to the same article; where lies the difference between the Sanskrit word and the Kannada word? If the right meaning is conveyed how does it matter if it is conveyed through Kannada words or through Sanskrit words?" In the same context he praised his mother-tongue in words that are repeated by school children even to-day. "Easy is Kannada like the plantain stripped of skin, like the sugarcane with the covering removed, like milk cooled to comfortable warmth. If through this language you learn to know the self within and earn liberation is it not enough? What more do you get through Sanskrit?"

Ranganatha's object was to communicate knowledge required for the liberation of the self. In metaphysics he was a follower of the non-dualistic school of Sankara. In ethics he teaches what the Haridasa and the Sivasarana taught. The poet first describes the kind of man to whom alone knowledge of Brahma may be communicated. The man should be virtuous, charitably disposed and kind; free from false pride and conceit, and not overbearing, anxiously pursuing ways of knowledge; controlling body and mind;

unmoved by prosperity and failure alike ; and much more beside. One would imagine that a man who is all this would be in no need of Brahma knowledge. So high is the standard fixed for the seeker of that knowledge that it seems to be the end, not the beginning of a good life. No man can however neglect the teaching saying that he is not fit for the knowledge of Brahma. If he is not fit he should try to become fit. If he does not do this but goes the way that the world leads him, he will lose his soul. The world is a hard place to save one's self from. If a man yields to desire it takes him further and further from real happiness. For getting that real happiness renunciation is the one way. No man can be in the world and yet be out of it. Being in the world and thinking thoughts of liberation is like a blind man holding a mirror. In most of the cases a man of the world cannot think these thoughts either. He cannot perceive their value. As a son adopted to another belongs to the line of the foster-father and not of the one who got him, so this man, though a child of immortality, is devoted to the world and not to thought of immortality. A man should therefore take definitely to righteousness. This taking to righteousness is not a mere matter of form. Not by bathing and holding the rosary and observing silence does man gain liberation, nor by mortifying the flesh but by real purity of heart, real devotion, real discipline and control of desire. Men should realise that presence in a family group is an accident in this life of its members. They are assembled there as many persons unconnected with one another assemble at an inn during a journey ; or as birds assemble of an evening on a tree on the way

to their nests. To love life too much is to act like the sheep brought to slaughter which eats the leaf tied for decoration. Particularly should one remember that he is not to support himself by pursuing wrong ways. If he does so his folly is comparable to that of the frog which is caught in the snake's mouth and snaps at a gnat flying near its own mouth. Unmindful of its own doom of death it tries to take another life.

Thus the poet proceeds repeating advice, amplifying statements of truth, illustrating, exhorting. The words are remarkably simple and direct. The similes of the sheep brought to slaughter and the frog in the mouth of the snake are old ones. The Sivasaranas used them. The Haridasas used them. This teacher uses them. Other similes in this book are equally striking. The poet compares the ways of a man who goes on in worldly life to the insect which rolls a small ball of cowdung up and up. The farther it goes the heavier the ball becomes and it is ever in front occupying the whole of the creature's horizon. It is a wonderfully apt picture of the position of the man of the world engrossed in the world's affairs. When we nurse our bodies too lovingly, death, says the poet, laughs from behind, as the unchaste wife when her husband caresses her child. The man may or may not suspect but certainly does not realise that the child belongs to her only and not him. So we either do not suspect or do not realise that our body is the property of death.

#### (ii) **An Aphorist and His Aphorisms**

Among the most popular of literary works in Kannada in the past was a book of aphorisms by



Sarvajna. Aphoristic writing seems to have developed in the three oldest of the Dravidian languages at some stage in the course of their history. Tamil literature has the verses of the *Kural* and of Avvaiyar and Telugu has the aphorisms of Vemana. Sarvajna is the representative of this tradition in Kannada.

Sarvajna's aphorisms are all put into a verse form of three lines. This like most verse in Kannada can be sung. The people, in fact, knew the aphorisms nearly always as sung and rarely by mere reading. Sarvajna appears to have been a religious mendicant of the Virasaiva faith. In all likelihood, he made the pieces as the days' incidents suggested thought and evoked feeling. It is possible also that he went about singing his own pieces. The words in these aphorisms are always simple. The structure of the verse is equally simple but shows great skill in composition. Common words are used to express very difficult ideas and are invariably successful. This Sarvajna achieves by giving them a setting of other words equally simple. He, as it were, puts together four simple words and makes a 'star'. It was this felicity of expression combined with the profundity of the wisdom behind that brought popularity to his verse. This teacher was the popular embodiment of the culture which developed in the Karnatak country during three or four centuries. The aphorisms attributed to him are in thousands. Some of them are no doubt spurious, but the larger number show traces of a genius that could be found perhaps in only one man. His work has influenced later generations as only the best type of poetry in any country can. Its apparent simplicity

seems to have misled many later writers to try his form and father their own work on him. Common people also seem to have learnt composition in this style. Many of the three-line verses of village song to which we shall refer later are in this form and composed in this manner. So too is many a little lullaby crooned by the Kannada mother over her child. Sarvajna was in this sense a great model for his people. The aphorisms cover large ground. They speak of God, of the human soul, of worship, of good conduct, of practical affairs and of many other subjects which in his time should have been considered as of immediate importance in a good life.

Sarvajna emphasises the need for getting a good teacher and serving him well and learning from him. Be with your *guru* like an ox or a servant, a plant in the backyard or shoe for his feet. Do all you can and keep in his company. But then he should be a good *guru*. A *guru* who does not know his ground, a disciple who is unable to understand and teaching which is unaware of its own purpose; this is like a blind man entering water. The nature of God Sarvajna describes in words that we recognise as those of the *Upanishads* and of the long stream of religious literature that has come after them. There is for God no becoming nor extinction; nor high nor low; nor injury nor sin nor obstruction; the *Linga* has no temple. There is but one. How can there be two? One is the Omniscient Lord. For the whole Universe there is but one God. Say not that God, this God, and Great God. God is He who God of Gods protects all beings in the universe. As wheat is one but many

dishes are made of it the God that takes the obeisance of all of us is one and great ; He with the three eyes. He dwells in stone and dust and in the tip of the thorn ; Siva is wherever He is thought of. He is wherever you are. Do not say this is untrue. The Great One is present everywhere. As the elephant is contained in the mirror, so God is contained in the mind of a saint who knows. The pure in heart see Him within. The impure look for Him in vain. If a man is pure, Siva stays in him firm and fixed. If he is not pure but prays, Siva leaves him and stays anywhere else.

Worship says Sarvajna is an affair of the mind and spirit, not of the body. The mind must worship. Then the place does not matter. If the mind does not enter into worship that worship is useless. To him who bears in the mind what does it matter if he is at home or in the temple? And the man who does not bear in the mind, what does he gain if he is at the top of the temple? What is home and what is wood? It is sufficient if the mind remembers. If a man cannot reach God with his mind and remember, what does he get being on the crest of the hill? If the mind bears thought of God the body itself becomes a monastery. If on the contrary the mind wanders and dwells on many things know that the body is as a ruined house. The man who would know God should control his desires. The body is a temple, life is the *Linga*. For him whose senses are conquered salvation comes without doubt. The body of him who has known God should be subdued ; as the water is quite absorbed in the cocoanut which is ripe. The man who has realised truth will not relapse. The pearl is born of water but

does it become water again? So a man who has realised will not again be worldly.

Mere form of religion is no good. By rolling in ashes does the ass become religious? He who does not realise truth but smears himself with ashes is such an ass. The important thing is the practice of the spirit of religion. What is the need of discipline day after day and of worship in addition? And why should the head be shaven if a man has truth on his forehead? Pilgrimages are unnecessary. Why go to Benares, can you tell me? When our Ferryman is within, tell me the reason for wandering. Truth is a drug in the backyard. Search not for it far and wide. Search where you are. Mortification of the flesh is no way to peace. He is a fool who says he will get salvation by torturing the body. If you hit the ant-hill with a log of wood will the serpent within die?

People who have realised will not boast or talk of it. Men gather about them as a matter of course. Does the mirror invite people to see it? The man in whom knowledge has blossomed is like the mirror. All talk of I know is mere falsehood. If you know say not you know. He only knows who can keep his mouth shut. If you know God you should not talk. If you know God and talk of it, it is as if you went to steal and coughed. Possession of the world's goods is no good. There is other more important wealth. How does position profit one who knows not the self? And to one who knows it how does position matter? The world is however not to be despised nor the body. This world is a place for realisation and the body is the instrument. Where is realisation for a man after

death? Understand the meaning of realisation before death comes, when you have life.

The aphorisms collect wisdom on many topics of daily importance. The words regarding charity illustrate this very well. Indra, says Sarvajna speaking of this subject, is seated on the elephant but will not grant anything. Siva does not ride as high being seated on a bull but gives all we desire. It is not what one owns but one's disposition that makes him give. He who has but does not give is poor in spirit. His position is worse than the beggar's. If you give alms to those who beg you get endless bliss; if you refuse you become the beggar. Having given do not worry nor speak of the gifts you have made. Do not say that you gave and lost. It all becomes a provision for yourself with God. Devotion and charity pursued for their own sake bring the reward of a happy life here and hereafter. Get true knowledge, give up show of ceremony and do good forgetting yourself; you will have heaven and Siva will be pleased and the world will bow before you. But charity should not be undertaken in hope of a return. Charity which does not know itself, eyes that do not open but see, worship of one who desires nought in return—know that these are more than Siva. There is also such a thing as discretion in giving. If the oil in the lamp is exhausted do they empty a hogshead into it? Give not in excess nor forgetting the duty of giving refuse to give.

This is the code of conduct for the soldier. A step forward is heaven; a step backward is hell. Each forward step holds the merit of a horse sacrifice. If it becomes necessary give up life for the master.

Many of the pieces embody a shrewd and cultured worldly wisdom. Do not fight those who are too strong for you. Will a wise man walk on a stone overgrown with lichen? To speak to the strong in defiance brings evil without delay.

Sarvajna has advice relating to conduct in a court. Do not feel playful in the King's audience hall. Engage not in blame of another though humorous. Trust no one completely. Do not speak boastfully nor stand up again and again nor blame all and sundry in the audience of the King. Of uncongenial surroundings he makes some shrewd observations. Where men know one thing from another we may somehow continue to live. Where they say that the elephant is a pig how can we stay? If the roof of the house cracks, if the paramour loses her teeth, if the King lies, leave the place without telling anyone. Mari dwells in a place in which, if you fall no one touches you, no woman cares for you and there is no King to think of you and protect you. Far better than milk got under obligation is gruel thin as water. Rather than eat warm food under disgrace it is desirable to join a company of beggars.

A man's enemies are within him. Idleness is the mother of want. To the idle man there is not even gruel to drink. To him who does not shirk work it is like the jack tree bearing fruit even from the root up.

Here is the philosophy of credit : at the moment of borrowing it is like the eating of rice in milk ; when the creditor comes for the money it is like the breaking of a rib. And this is the philosophy of food : there is no God greater than the God called food ; life itself

lasts only while food lasts; food is God on earth. The sage describes good and bad men at some length. The companionship of the good is pleasing as drinking honey. The companionship of the bad is like playing in ditch water. To move with those who know is like eating sugar; to move with him who asserts what does not exist is like butting against stone. When good men die, the angels weep; when a bad man dies it is like the disappearance of itches from one's body. Wary as the tongue between two rows of teeth will the good man stay among bad men. By moving among the good a thief will become honest. An innocent man moving among rogues will become the veriest rogue by influence. Give anything and get the friendship of a wise man; as for the fool give him a piece of gold and get rid of him. Good men do not die in death. They are the immortals of the world to come; they purify. Say not of them that they are dead. Like the mother that bore you it is they that will take you up. The speech of true men is the true sacred stream, so too the deeds of the good and the companionship of the truly noble. What kind of sacred stream is the stream of flowing water?

Sarvajna preaches the need for facing life. When you fear evil, do not run to the wood nor become abject with terror. Is there a world which destiny does not know? He teaches us that a man prescribes the future for himself by his present conduct. Like the mother who takes up the child which is in play and gives it suck, man's past life keeps up with him and holds him and feeds him. Of wealth he spoke with deep wisdom. Wealth will go of itself for one

cause or another, like the forest which burns from a spark born in its own bosom. Similarly of life. Life subsists on life and brings forth life. Where is death? Know that selfishness is the true death in the world.

As a true Virasaiva, Sarvajna does not believe in caste. The *yogi* has no caste, the wise man is not self-willed; the sky does not rest on pillars and rafters and there are no slums in heaven for the depressed. One is the earth on which men tread; one is the water which all men drink; one is the fire which burns for all. Whence then come caste and sect amongst men? Is the light in the house of the man of low caste low? Say not well-born and out-caste. He on whom God's mercy alights, he is well-born. The arguments against caste can perhaps not be summed up better.

Sarvajna is a master of a fine humour. The following aphorisms illustrate it. Say not that the goldsmith's boy is young; like the flea which bites however small, he will steal as soon as he begins to work. It is right to say that the oil-miller knows not God; for if Siva should come down to earth the miller will get him to drive the mill for some time. My lover likes not fine clothes, nor good rice; he likes not ginger nor curds; for why does not he like them? because he has not got them. To quarrel with the head of your village, to hold secret converse with a deaf person and a fool teaching a wiser than himself, is like a man feeling hungry and rising and eating husk. The mind of the saint wearing deer-skin for clothing and thin from fasting and sitting amidst rocks for meditation is all in women. Say not of your beloved, what beautiful curls, what angelic form, how



small the waist, how fragrant the presence : to each the silly one whom he loves seems a jewel. If you give drugs and philtres will women take to you? If you would that women should take to you or the world should take to you use that great drug gold.

### (iii) Proverbs

The proverbs of a people embody their wisdom and indicate their culture and outlook on life. What the people believe to be constant truth is given form in some context in pithy and expressive word and phrase which strike the popular mind as apt and receive the stamp of approval. The word and phrase then become coin of the realm and run from tongue to tongue.

Kannada has a large number of proverbs that show an alert mind, a wide and tolerant outlook on life and a keen sense of humour. Great knowledge of the world and considerable shrewdness in affairs are embodied in them. Peculiarities of castes, peculiarities of individuals are turned off in some fine phrase. Even when the description is not accurate it will stand well as caricature. There is pointed satire in some cases and some are stories in little. All the proverbs show a sense of aptness in expression.

As expression of worldly wisdom some proverbs may be cited. Economy or cupidity in the wrong place is criticised by saying "Honour lost over an arecanut cannot be got back for an elephant." Idleness is censured by saying "To him who sits and eats a pot of gold will not last." Activity, on the other hand, is praised: "Mud on hand means curds in the mouth." "Man is ruined by sitting, woman by wandering

about." Reserve inconsistent with position is thus censured: "When you have come out to dance why cover your face with the *saree*?" "Ask not if the *Shanbhogue* got his pay nor if the wife's people got their food;" says one proverb. The one knows how to look after himself and the other after her relatives. "See the mother and take the daughter, see the milk and take the buffalo" means the mother's ways prove what the daughter will be like. "There is no better taste than salt and no better relative than a mother." "A mother-in-law like a donkey, a mother like a pearl," is what a girl desires to have. The mother makes the mother's house, the water makes a well. "Tank may flow into tank. A dog can only lap up water," means that each must live according to his nature or his destiny. "You may tie bells to a cock's feet, will it cease to peck the dunghill," means much the same thing. "The *Paria* was given a muslin and tied stone in it and tore it." He did not know how to use it. The supposed characteristics of castes are hit off beautifully in these proverbs. "It may be a sister's gold but the goldsmith should steal some." It has become second nature to him. "Money given to the mistress and a corpse taken to the cremation ground": neither can come back. "Setti, you say, step not on this rubbish. What will you give me, he says, if I eat it." He is so anxious to make a bargain in every case. "Do not become a Brahmin's servant or an oil-miller's ox." They do not know when they are tired and overwork them. "The king's mind and a tree's shade." They move and are inconstant. Trust not in princes. Power without discretion is

described in this proverb: "The bullock has calved, say you. Tie it in the shed, says he." "When God himself was eating rope, his servant prayed for vermicelli," laughs at undue ambition in the service of a master himself not too prosperous. The following proverbs embody general observations. "The banyan has no flower, borrowing has no end." "The son that is given crumbs obeys your wish. The son-in-law that is given sugar and milk stands on the dunghill and barks." "Wisdom placed before the fool is like leaf placed before the goat." He eats it but gets no good from it. "When the king spoke the town shook. When the old man spoke his beard shook." "The goldsmith pierces the ear without hurting." This is popular belief and may have nothing to do with fact. "Does the tenant become bankrupt by birds pecking grain?" "Words are lost when spoken, pearls are lost when broken," preaches that silence is golden. "The buffalo has two horns, pride has eight."

The following proverbs are little stories. The old man heard the word marriage and asked "Is it to me?" A man is willing to marry, however old he may be. "Will the faithless creature sour the milk before she runs away?" She is breaking the great duty of fidelity. Will she observe a small detail of household work? "If you lift the hill on to my head what a distance could I carry it:" refers to the story of a rogue who duped a King as an athlete who could carry a hill if fed for six months. "The blind woman's amour is a sleepless night to the household." "Engaged to bear the corpse he complained the hair made it heavy," describes men who make trouble about

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trifles. "He quarrelled with the oilman and ate his bread dry,"—he could not get oil for it. "The unpractised Brahmin performed sacrifice and burnt his beard and moustache," is another of these stories.

The humour of these proverbs is too obvious to need pointing out. The words in every case are apt and simple. In many cases there is rhyme; in most cases there is a balancing of idea and phrase. Altogether these proverbs cover the whole ground of daily experience and as expression of the collective wisdom of a population would compare favourably with the proverbs of any language or people.

## 7. FOLKSONG

### I

A GREAT deal of folksong and ballad is current among the people of the Karnataka. The earliest poetry in any language is of course folksong. Even when poetry has become an affair of the lettered the folk poet does not cease to sing; he is the people's voice and his song is endless. If the best thought in the country finds expression in the language of the people and the work is taken to their ears by public reading, recitation and narrative, the poetic sense of the people is naturally stimulated. In such a case the folk poet gains rather than loses by growth of letters in the land. In the Kannada country to-day one can hear cartmen as they drive along the road, the cowherd boy tending cattle, or the agriculturist drawing water up from the well for his crops, singing as they attend to their work. Frequently there will come into the village a *jogi* who can sing snappy verse with just a touch of impropriety, a verse tale setting forth a popular version of the adventures of epic heroes, or a devotional song speaking of Siva and Parvati or Rama and Sita. Some villages have folk-theatres staging long versions of old stories written by a local bard. Women sing when doing their household work songs of the Saiva or Vaishnava saints or songs like theirs written by some layman. The young mother sends her child to sleep by crooning some simple lullaby which she perhaps learnt by hearing from her mother when herself a baby. It is perhaps the song to which that mother

herself went to sleep in her time. Rising early in the morning to grind corn for the household the daughter or daughter-in-law sings in a long-drawn tune, to the accompaniment of the grindstone, verse composed by a predecessor and giving apt expression to her own heart's thoughts. The cooly sawing timber is not without his relaxation in this style. The harsh sound produced by the metal cutting its way through wood is relieved to the ears of the passerby by nonsense rhyme whose abruptness matches the noise made by the hand-drawn saw.

## II

Some songs of this kind are current in and around Seringapatam. One of them relates to an athlete who ran a gymnasium for young fellows. This man dies and these same young fellows are praising him and describing the impression produced

"When the master walked down  
The central road in Ganjam town."

"Don't you try to rule the roost, nor walk about unwarily"—that was the instruction in those days. The boys of this gymnasium went to another gymnasium to fight. What happened? The young fellows of this latter gymnasium fled ignominiously. This athlete, however, was mortal like common men and died. The disciples made a grave for him in the gymnasium itself. I have not got the song complete. These are only scraps. It is altogether a very spirited song and reflects the athleticism which was common in the Seringapatam country not long ago and traces of which can still be observed in the people there.

Another song relates to the fall of Seringapatam. It describes how the fort was lost through treachery. It was probably composed before the State was restored to the present Royal House.

"Alas, alas, how badly they were deceived and the power of the Sultan passed into stranger's hands!

"They lacked not arms; they had a strong fort; an army they had; they lacked not strength.

"The white man of the artillery—the one that came from Madras—stayed concealed for six months with Marisat of bad name.

"He stood on the fort walls with guns and everything, this Marisat, and villainously waived his kerchief, the scoundrel Marisat.

"When the girls had gathered before the temple, Marisat swore on sacred milk and rice: alas, what deceit!

"The white men got the throne, the Sultans were beaten down. Whose was the throne? Whose is it now? The queen she got the throne."

### III

Away in the Malnad, in the days of Deepavali or late autumn, one sees bands of singers here and there dancing and beating time to their music with little sticks. Sometimes, particularly in the bright fortnight, one hears the sound of these dance-songs late in the night, the voices of men singing in chorus and the sound of sticks beating in time, coming from across the large places between hill and hill. It is impossible to describe the weird effect that such sounds produce, coming from far away, in the still evening, over the heads of sleeping forests, in the calm and clear moonlight. In these dances, there are generally ten, twelve or fourteen, or

other even number of people. A smaller number than ten produces an effect of insufficiency. The dancers stand together generally in two rings, one within another, with hands in particular positions, and start with the song a series of slow and rhythmic movements so designed that as they move their hands forwards and back, each hits the stick in the other's hand and beats time to the music they sing. In the course of the dance, each man changes his place from the inner to the outer and from the outer to the inner circle. In course of time, they complete the circle and go back each to his old place. They complete several such rounds in the course of one song. The songs are of various kinds. As illustrating some of them, I might say a few words about the songs that I heard at Aldur some years ago. One of them related to one Rangappanaika. "Rangappanaika, Rangappanaika," it calls out. "Oh come and tell us what we shall do in this juncture. The foreigners have come to the land and are despoiling and ill-treating the people. They are sweeping up the wealth of the country, they are raiding the land." It is a long story and goes on to say that Havalli Veeregowda, Dronankodige Dodde Gowda, Vastara Halge Gowda and other chief Gowdas of the country gathered together in council to settle what should be done in the circumstances. When all had come, one man whose counsel was most needed, Rangappanaika, had not come, and so they all called out to him. Some of the words in the song sounded curious to me when I first heard it. "Don't go to Mysore and don't pay rent!" This apparently was what was settled at the meeting. The foreigner who had come to the country, however, was still there



and was still despoiling the people. These leaders had to dispose of him. They, therefore, planned to catch him, and once when he had come to his courtesan's house, waylaid him and caught him. I looked into the history of these tracts some time later and saw that one of the chief heroes of the insurrection of 1831 in the Malnad of that time was Rangappanaika of Tarikere. The hero of this song that I heard at Aldur is apparently the same Rangappanaika.

Another song that the Malnad dancers sang that night was a young woman's remonstrance with a stranger who would injure her honour. "Is it proper for you, O Sir, is it proper?" The young woman is alone in the house and the big man of the place comes in and she expostulates with him. Another song was, "I cannot live with thee, old man;" "I cannot stand thy lightness, girl." A young girl has been married to an old man. She has a zest in life to which he is not equal: she tells him that she cannot live with him. To him all the play proper to her age seems disgusting: he tells her that he cannot stand this frivolity. This is the Kannada version of "Crabbed age and youth cannot go together". A third song referred to two young heroes who had given up their lives in a fight. "O Ranga, thou art dead; Oh Saguna, thou art dead." These words formed the burden of the song and came with mournful iteration alternating with lines which sang the valour of Saguna and Ranga. The finest song I heard that night was an invocation to the Goddess of the *Chamṣaka* tree and the jasmine shrub. I do not remember all the words of this song, but it is in a peculiar tune and more pleasing than any

of the others. Often since, the tune has recurred to me and I have crooned it to myself with great pleasure. I have also put some words into the frame more or less to the effect I remember of the original. The poet in the song wanted the *Champakā* tree and the jasmine creeper to bloom and give flowers by early morning, for, said he, Seethaleswara was coming. "Bear good flowers," says the poet, "and bear them early in the morning, for Seethaleswara is coming." The manner in which this poet employs his words and his music to express the great adoration in his heart for Seethaleswara is marvellous. He repeats the words "Seethaleswara is coming" twice over at the end of each little piece; and the words come in a soft and moving tone. We can see that to him it is the great fact of life that Seethaleswara is coming. Seethaleswara is the deity on the Seethalianagiri, close to the Mudalianagiri, which is the highest peak in the Bababudan series. Seethalianagiri is quite a big hill, but it is close to Mudalianagiri and thus seems smaller, very much as a young elephant might beside his sire. The temple at Seethalianagiri was apparently the centre of much clan patriotism in the past, for we hear even to-day of people having the right of first sounding a drum in front of the temple on special occasions. This right is highly coveted and men in the past have been willing to lay down their lives for retaining it. That the deity who presided over a life of so much valour around should inspire the poet to such soft yet ardent sentiment is no wonder.

While the young men were singing and dancing, an old man stood right in their midst, and holding up the

dried stick of the areca, constantly jumped up and down ejaculating "ha, ha" and producing a ludicrous effect. I asked him at the end what all that was for. He said it was intended to encourage the youngsters. All the youngsters laughed at this. These dances are no doubt dances of clan militancy and valour. In the old days, the leader should have stood up in the centre, sword in hand, and taken part in the dance. The dancers were followers who also wielded weapons. The dancers now are no longer warriors and the centre dancer has either no sword to hold or, having it, is afraid to handle it lest he should do damage to himself or to others. So the dried stick of the areca-palm has taken the place of the sword of the old days—a change somewhat symbolical of the condition of the people. This old man began to talk of the days he remembered and all the glory of the Malnad that had passed away. The song of the Malnad and the happiness of the Malnad, he said, had deteriorated. In the days when the road came to Vastara—which is about six miles nearer to Chikmagalur—this old man was young. He was one of those who went and worked on the new road and earned some money. Now the road is gone much farther but taken away from the beauty of the country. There was then no Aldur and it was no easy matter for any cart to come up to Havalli. To-day carts from anywhere could come right into the heart of the village. And what the villages in these days had come to ! In those days they used to give every single mother's son among the dancers one large measure of grain. There was then one head for each village. Now everybody called himself a Gowda and everyone, unmindful

of the tradition, wanted the village dancers to go and dance in front of his house first. It may be, continued the old man, that the older families are now poor and that these men have become rich through lending grain at exorbitant rates of interest. But that did not make these latter better people than the former. How could the village dancers give up the older Gowda and dance first before the house of these newly rich people? If the dancers tell them that they would finish the old Gowda families first, these rich men get angry and threaten to form new groups of village dancers and create factions in the village. Can anything be more improper, asked the old man, and is it so easy to take hold of the dance-stick and dance? In the past, the selection of the dancer was made with care. They never would admit a bad boy to join the group. The man selected had to be clean in mind and body all the day that he was dancing. If he prostrated himself before God and came out and began, how like an inspired man he used to dance! It was a law in those days that while dancing the stick should not drop from the hand. If it did, it meant evil to the dancer. In those days they used to say that in older days still, the dancer who dropped the stick would, if a virtuous man, worship the stick and pray to God to forgive him and restore him to grace, and lo! the stick would rise from the ground and go to his hand of its own accord! All such manifestations of divine power had now gone for ever. Such and other stories the old man repeated at great length.

Most of the songs sung by these dancers are of the past, but the teachers even now add words to them

where necessary. The man that taught the dancers of Aldur the song of Rangappanaika, repeated the song afterwards. I found that between the words they sang in the dance and the words as he gave them, there was considerable difference. He said that while dancing the other words came to him. The cleverer of the dancers would also add words in this way. These men therefore are composing as they dance, which shows that their creative faculty is still alive. Of the songs themselves it should be said that there is good description in them, good characterisation, good narration. The words are simple and straight and good. There is a kind of rhythm and harmony and a natural comeliness about the composition that take it straight to our hearts.

#### IV

The ballad of Rangappanaika is a historical one. Other stories like this are said to be current in the Malnad, particularly in the country near Ballalarayana-drug. The Rani of Nagar ran to this hill fort when Haider captured her capital and Haider's son, Tipu, seems to have come here to take her prisoner and encamped in a village at the foot of the hill. At Kotigehar, ten miles from this place, I heard a song about a Sultan—but it did not speak of Tipu or the Rani. It related how a handsome maiden, the daughter of a local chief, was surprised by a general of the Sultan's army and carried away and ravished; how she came back, but the father would not take her into the household. It was a very long song and the incidents came very slowly.

Another song was a story of Yellamma. Yellamma

is probably a Dravidian goddess by origin. In this part of the country, she is made the mother of Parasurama, a hero of the *Mahabharata* days, later treated as an incarnation of Vishnu. This goddess, it seems, started one morning, disguised as an old hag with the body full of sores. The son asked her where she was going. She said she was going to the house of a poor woman and her brother. This poor woman had several children. Apparently she was a widow. Her brother lived in the same village. He was a prosperous man, but would not give anything to the poor. Yellamma came first to the brother and begged for something. He drove her away. She then came to the house of the widow and asked for alms. The widow said, "I am poor. My children have nothing to eat. What shall I give you, O poor old woman?" This pleased the goddess because, though she had nothing herself, the widow felt kindly to a beggar. She said, "Go and ask your brother and bring something to me." The widow said, "Very well; wait." She went to her brother's house and asked the brother for some grain. He said, "I will not give you anything. What will remain to me if I go on giving to the poor people? By helping you, I become like you." She shed tears, but he took no pity on her. Then she went to her younger sister who was living in the brother's house, and told her what had happened. That sister took pity on her and, putting some grain into a vessel, started from the house as if for bringing water and gave the grain to the elder sister near the well. The latter brought it to the house and made some food with it and even though the children were hungry she served it to the old woman.

The old woman immediately assumed her divine form and said, "I am pleased by your charity; prosper" and disappeared. The poor widow's house changed suddenly into an excellent building and overflowed with grain. At the same moment, the brother's house caught fire and was burnt down. The horses died in their stables, the bullocks and cows and calves in the cattle-yard. The grain was all burnt up. Nothing was left of the clothes except ashes.

This story should have been written to inculcate the duty of charity. The descriptive portion of it was very realistic. The way of the village, the manners of the poor and the rich, and the conversation are a transcription from life. The description of the sores on the old woman's form which goddess Yellamma assumed was gruesome. The effect of such a story on the people of the Malnad may well be imagined. The bright light and the deep shade, the great silence of the nights and the loneliness in which their lives are enveloped, make these people highly superstitious and teach them to see a spirit in every tree and the devil round every corner. Their hearts should thrill with fear at the thought that any old woman whom they meet may be Yellamma. The only consolation is that she can be pleased by giving corn. Songs like this do perhaps as much harm in lowering people's courage as good in making them charitable.

## V

People in the villages often hear popular versions of the episodes of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. The outline of the narrative is taken from these poems

but the characters are from the village. I heard one such story connected with Arjuna and his queens Chitrangada and Ulupi in the country near Sira some years ago. Arjuna once went out on a pilgrimage of twelve years' duration. It was then that he married Chitrangada and Ulupi. He left them in Manipur and went out to complete the pilgrimage. Towards the end of the period, he came to Manipura disguised as a *jogi*, spoke saucily to the wives, and laughed to think that they could not recognise him; and when at last they did, he disappeared and came to Hastinapura where his mother Kunti was. He danced a *jogi* dance before the palace and wanted to have a practical joke with his mother as he had with the wives. Kunti saw the *jogi*, noticed the resemblance to her son, and called him up and said: "I had a son, Jogi, who looked just like you. He went on a pilgrimage twelve years ago. Did you meet him?" He said: "O no, mother. I did not. Twelve years, old lady, is a long time. Your son may have been killed in a fight, or have fallen ill and died." Kunti feels unhappy and gives him some presents. By then Chitrangada and Ulupi come in search of him. Arjuna moves away and the young women tell their mother-in-law that the *jogi* was Arjuna himself. Shortly thereafter, they start in search of him again and, not finding him, try to drown themselves in three or four lakes. They do not succeed, as their time is not come. They then meet some *Naga* girls and hearing that Arjuna proceeded in a particular direction go that way. When they are bathing in a pool, Arjuna comes there and to let them know he has come takes up some of their clothes, goes to a bush nearby and



lies down and sleeps. The *Naga* girls finish bathing first, and coming up and missing part of their clothes, search for the thief and, recognising the clothes lying beside the *jogi*, are angry that he should have looked on while they were bathing, and bite him. He dies. Here, by the pool, the two wives of Arjuna find that their bangles break of their own accord and that the marriage knots of their necklaces give way. As this means that their husband is dead, they come out in sorrow and see the *jogi* and recognise him as Arjuna. They then pray to the gods. Some deity or other appears and brings Arjuna back to life.

The whole of this story is popular fancy. The characters are from the *Mahabharata*, but the incidents are all produced from popular imagination. The mother who saw a resemblance in features which were not evident to the wives, the queen who says to a beggar that he looks like the prince her son, and the wives who go in search of the husband, are just any mother and two girls of a Kannada or even an Indian village. The palace here is a common house. There is a cat in it which feels forlorn when the two princesses go away, and walks up and down the beam mewing piteously. When Arjuna first comes to Chitrangada and Ulupi and behaves saucily to them, they are furious and let a tiger out of its cage to attack him. Arjuna had fed it with his hands earlier when he lived with Chitrangada. The wives could not recognise the husband but the tiger which had received kindness from him did. It rushed at him first but, when it came near him, it slowed down, purred softly to the old master and licked the hands and feet in caress. In these pictures, the

poet of this village composition shows a sympathetic knowledge of animal life comparable to that of classic poetry. When Arjuna goes to take away the clothes of the fair bathers, he takes a large leaf from a bush nearby and holds it against his eyes so that he might not see them. The delicacy attributed to the hero shows the refinement of manners which village life had developed. The characters are all most lovable, true to village life, and finely drawn. The *jogi* who recited the song went on for hours and yet it did not end. He and his class are bards for leisure and are in no hurry to finish. When one of them goes to a village, he generally spends one day in the place. He recites the story from morning to noon and again noon to night, and only when his patrons in one village have finished hearing him, thinks of going to the next one.

## VI

A group of workers in Dharwar has, within the last few years, published a valuable collection of three-line pieces of folksong, sung generally by women grinding corn in the northern parts of the Karnatak country. These pieces are perfect specimens of folk-poetry. Their words are simple, their imagery is natural, their thought pure and innocent; and there is hardly one mood of woman's heart which does not find easy and graceful expression in one or another of these pieces. There are pieces invoking God at the beginning like—

"Mahadeva, I have no other God but you; nor do I think that it is myself that shall do this and that. O strong One, do thou conduct everything.

"I desire no other and have no wealth. O Kariranga of Kalhalli, O Venkoba, I greatly desire you all the moments of my life."

Then these pieces give us pictures of village life in practically all its phases and we go from situation to situation following them. Here is a daughter who has had some words with her mother and is making up the quarrel and saying: "Who should settle a dispute between mother and daughter? Has the pearl become heavy to the ear-ring, my mother? and O my mother who bore me do you think that I meant what I said?" Or we hear another daughter describing how she enjoyed her visit to her mother's house. She went to her mother's house and ate all that tongue desired. She ate of the dishes all she wanted. She saw her mother's face and drank, as it were, her breast-milk again as when a child. If the mother is poor, the daughter may get nothing beyond a loving look and a kindly word, but they would be to her all she wanted. She has, however, come away to her husband's house, because it is not right for a daughter to wish to stay in her mother's house. Her proper place is her husband's house. Even if you drink only gruel, she says, the husband's house is the proper place. Even if you are in a palanquin, with servants holding whisks on left and right, do not stay in the obligation of the mother's house. Or we hear another daughter who has come back from the mother's house for it is no good without the mother. Go not to the mother's house, she says, when the mother is not there; when the calf comes to a tank in which there is no water and turns back, so will you feel the pain of it. The simile is beautiful; so too is the affectionate reverence for the mother expressed when the daughter asks: "Why do you want so many days to go to Benares? My mother's house is

an hour's way; and there sits my Benares—my mother, who gave me birth." Or the young woman has heard that a brother is born and she tells us that she was feeling she had no one of her own; then she learnt that, like the young moon of the bright fortnight, this brother to her was born, a sunny child. Another sister is very proud of a grown-up brother and says that when that Sardar her brother comes the jasmine blossoms drop on him. The ears of cardamom bend down to her prince-like brother and sprinkle their juice on him. Possibly, the brother comes along to make enquiries and to take the sister. By the tradition of village life some one from the mother's house was supposed to go and make such enquiries from time to time and take the girl home for a short stay. The sister tells us it was six months since she came to her mother-in-law's house, and the moonlight had become to her as the sun; and now her strong young brother has come to take her. Or we see a brother unhappy, sending away a sister whom he has brought up. He has sent her away and is standing on the mound, looking where she is going. The brother is wiping his eyes with the end of his coat and saying, "My sister from to-day belongs to others". The use of the coat-tail to wipe the eye makes the picture wonderfully real. Or we hear the mother speaking on a similar occasion. "My daughter," she says to the girl, "I send you away and go up to the roof of the house; presently the mango grove hides you, my child, and you are no longer ours and belong to others." The idea of still owning the daughter while the eye can see her is pathetic in the extreme. It is a very true description of the mind of the unsophisticated village

mother, and shows in the village poet a knowledge of the mother's ways as accurate as the reference to the coat-tail in describing the brother. Or we go to another house and hear the daughter of the house in dispute with her brother's wife. "Are the eyes and the nose strangers to each other, sister-in-law? My brother and I are not strangers. Oh, my brother's wife, it is because of you that my brother has become as a stranger to me." Another young woman says this was her experience too. She went to the mother's house running up, thinking her mother was there; but hearing within the voice of her brother's wife she turned back near the door. Or in the street, we see a rather pretty girl and a passerby asks her: "Whose daughter are you, O my pretty doll with the eyes of a gazelle? My sister with the curling hair and of fine teeth, whose daughter are you, O good one?" And on the steps of a house nearby is a young woman sending with an acquaintance a present of some fruits for a friend; large *borê* fruit had come for sale in the street, she says, and asks him to take some of it for her friend in the neighbour's house who is pregnant.

Life in the mother-in-law's house is described in these pieces. We should remember that the pictures are of families living in the patriarchal joint family system. In such a family it may happen that the elder or younger son of the house finds fault with a sister-in-law for omissions and commissions. The young woman tells us that when her husband abuses she sheds no tears but when his brother abuses it is as if it rained without any clouds at all. Or another finds life very smooth and exults. A husband like a prince, a brother-in-law

who is earning, and a mother-in-law who is patient with her; what difficulty is there in looking after such a household? Or possibly, she is telling her relatives how well she has conducted herself. She is not a disgrace to her father who got her. She has not stood in a crowd and laughed, nor brought a bad name to her relatives. Another young woman explains how it is she is so well-behaved. The Sardar her brother called her and said to her, "Do not enter neighbour's houses, my sister: if you do so, people will gossip and spoil our name." Another young woman is proud of her husband. How does it matter if he works for wages or carries packages? Her husband is not cheap to her. She feels as if she had a weight of gold in her house. She or another tells us that as the husband went out she looked at his gait. That lotus, his heel, was prettier than the evening moon. The picture of the love of husband and wife which we get in the pieces is beautiful. Life is empty to each when the other is absent. "The wife is not moving about the kitchen. The food is not good to the tongue. Mother, the wife has gone to her father's house." This is the condition of the young man. The woman asks the husband who is going on a journey: "When will you come back, my sweet-scented lover? My lover with the head-dress so full of fragrance, tell me, my lover, when you are returning." He replies: "O Lotus! I cannot live without seeing you nor, O Jasmine, can I get free of your witchery. My pine-petal, I cannot stay away from you." Quarrels between husband and wife are also pictured in these pieces. A husband beats the wife for wishing to go to her father's house. Very soon he is sorry at heart and when alone

with her takes hold of the end of her cloth and asks, "Am I more to you or is your mother's house more?" A quarrel between husband and wife who really love one another is not of long duration. It is as rubbing sandalwood, as pouring water on the image of God, as the swift flow of the river, and may make for more love later. Or from these pleasant pictures we move to see a wife remonstrating when the husband proposes to marry again. "Is it good, O husband, to wear coat over coat? When one wife is alive, if another comes and then another, will there be good in the household, O husband?"

The mother's love for the child is described in these pieces in words of extraordinary tenderness and with marvellous skill. A mother says that when the child is crying his lips are as the tendril of coral, his eyebrows as the long leaf of the margosa and his eyes shine with the sheen of the falchion in Siva's hand. When a child has cried long and hard and upset everyone else and all the work, the mother is still patient and says: "Let him cry as he likes, sister, but let me have the child; it matters not if the work of the household is spoilt; let my house be full of children like this." And then she says to him: "Cry not, O little one, cry not my sweet jasmine. Do not cry, my wealth of gold, my boy heavy as gold to carry." Or it is a grown-up boy and the mother sends him out to play. "Go to your play and come back, my child, and I shall wash your feet. I shall take the clear water of the cocoanut and wash your dear face that shines like gold." A child is everything in life to the mother. A pillow the height of her arm, says a mother, and a bed the length of her

body, and the jewel her boy sleeping before her; why after this shall she trouble about her husband? If it is a grown-up lad, the mother has no care for the king and his men for in her house is her son who brings the half-share from any king and men of them all. Or the son has been provoked by someone and the mother says to him: "Eyes like Cupid and eye-brows like Hercules and a waist that is slim as Apollo's, my son, who provoked you, O Lion." Naturally, these people thought that the life of a childless woman is no life, being no more than the hired bullock's labouring and labouring and, when it has finished labouring, lying down one day and dying. Children make all sorrow bearable. Sita Devi, the daughter of King Janaka, to swing her children, tied the cradle to the wild woods but spent her exile smiling. "Mine be poverty," says a mother of this folk-song, "and mine many children and mine in addition my God's grace; and my God, be yours the thought of my poverty."

The following pieces record a conversation. The village gossip comes to a young woman who is too happy and tries to upset that happiness:

"Oh you with the ear-rings of gold, cutting fodder for your cattle, have you no care whatever? Your husband was smiling with another woman there!"

The young woman replies:

"Let him smile if he will, my mother, the smiling Kedige. The fragrant flower which I own and wear, let her see for a moment."

A man with a handsome wife is casting eyes on a dark beauty. He is asked possibly by the same old lady:



"Gallant of the dark eye-brows, casting your eyes on the crow, with the mango in the house, why are you gazing at the jambolan?" The same old woman or another like her condemns unequal marriage roundly. Like mixing *dhall* in mud is giving a young girl to an old man. Shameless are the parents that do this. Love of nature and of other life comes out in the following pieces:

"The millet is ripening white in the field that lies in the valley. Eat without noise, O parrot; and, my brother, the stone will come, go aside."

"One tree is beautiful among all trees—the mango tree. Beautiful among birds is the parrot, and among stars in the sky, the moon is most beautiful."

The first piece has possibly also a suggestion of secret love. This is a piece with which the grinding closes:

"Our grain is finished but not our song. We do not want your mill-stone any longer, mother. It wears the rings on our fingers."

The quiet humour of the complaint about the mill-stone is worth noting.

## VII

Humour is indeed a characteristic of a large part of these songs that are current among the people. Some of this humorous verse in the Telugu border of the Karnatak is in Telugu. The Kannada people in these parts, however, understand the words. The following pieces are specimens of these verses:

Her house—it stands on the hill;  
 Her husband—he is blind;  
 "Come, my lover, we shall flee  
 Across the hill, nor let him see;  
 My lover come," she says.

Kadiriga stands on the bund  
He moves not, nor leaves his place;  
"Come my lover, we shall flee  
Down the valley, nor let him see;  
My lover come," she says.

These pieces celebrate incompatibility from other cause than age and are rather unkind to the blind husband and the unmoved Kadiriga. They are intended to make the people laugh and succeed in doing so. They may offend a strict sense of morality but are very moderate, considering that they are folk-song. They do no great harm. Another song laughs at the pretended moderation of the demands made by a woman on her lover's purse. From the language it seems to be a song from the Dharwar country.

The beloved calls to her lover and says  
"Come, my lover sweet;  
O come, my lover, I shall not ask  
Too much—that were not meet.  
"I shall tell you all I want  
More than a seer of milk or ghee  
Per day I shall not ask—I shan't.  
Come, O come dearie.

"And one thing more, for my third toe  
I have no ring, my sweet;  
Pray bring me one for present use,  
No more: that were not meet."

In another song, an ardent lover woos:

"O Maiden of Karnataka,  
You of tender glance,  
And waist small as a lion's,  
Pray, think a little, pity me,  
And tell me what will bring your love;  
Say not you do not want me  
Nor go away, good one!

"I have wandered up and down  
 All the village paths for you;  
 But you're so very proud!  
 Awake or asleep I see but you;  
 Nor after death shall I give up.  
 I'll give up all I have for you  
 O Maiden of Karnataka!"

There is perhaps not much humour in the sentiment. More of it is in the dialect used in the song and the ludicrous tune to which the words are set. Both are lost in translation.

A humorous song of the Malnad is a dialogue between a Vaishnava mendicant and an enquirer. The enquirer asks the mendicant—Dasaiya—where he gets his coffee, bread, milk, etc. The Dasaiya answers very promptly in nonsense rhyme. It may be rendered as follows in English; not, of course, in strict translation. The first word parodies the beginning of Vaishnava songs, "Gari" being used in place of "Hari":

"Gari Gari Gari Gari Narayana  
 Gari Narayana Gari Narayana  
 Gari Gari Gari Gari Dasaiya  
 Where did you have your coffee, Sir?"  
 "Mistress Coffam there sells coffee  
 Coffam coffee there I got."  
 "Coffee's right; well, where was bread and  
 Where was butter, if you please, Sir?"  
 "You know good Mistress Butter makes bread;  
 Butter, bread, both I got there."

The song thus goes on completing all the gamut of the day's needs. When the song began, I thought that "Gari" was a mistake for "Hari" and told the singer. The assembly, however, laughed and the singer

said it was all right. The song can be as long as the singer's invention of the Dasaiya's needs. It was received by the audience hilariously, not the least amused being the singer himself.

There is a couplet humorous in its context used by coolies sawing wood:

Antavani addresi  
Georgi Tavin Maddiresi.

It means:

Antony's address  
Is: George Town, Madras.

The five words of the couplet as first transcribed can now be recognised. The address is rather vague and possibly intentionally. For, if Antony has gone away with some property of yours, it is not the part of a friend to make the address too definite. One would imagine from the way that the whereabouts of Antony are stated at first, that some story is coming in which he plays some prominent part. This, however, is not the case. The information about Antony is given *apropos* of nothing in particular, and the distich is merely repeated over and over again while sawing. Another popular tag suggests the solemn manner of Puranic story and says:

A threadless Brahmin  
A beardless Muslim  
A Lingaless Jangam  
Distrust, he said, these three.

The mimicry of the verse is perfect and on the surface in the original but is lost in the translation.

Such verse is being composed even now. Clever young women make humorous songs for marriages and

such other occasions of festivity; and these songs are enjoyed greatly when they are sung. Composer and audience alike seem able to get pleasure from almost anything on these occasions.

### VIII

An excellent specimen of the folk poetry of the Karnataka is a popular poem in which a cow is the heroine. Punyakoti was one of a large herd which Kalinga the cowherd kept. She had a young calf. One day, coming from the forest where the herd had gone to graze, this cow was waylaid by a tiger. She pleaded for her life saying she had a young calf but in vain. Then the cow said: "Let me go to my calf for this evening. I shall give him suck and come back." The tiger doubted the cow. "Surely, you will not come back if I let you go." "I will," said the cow, "believe me." The tiger took the promise and let the cow go. Punyakoti came to the farm, gave suck to the calf, told the other cows what had happened, begged them to look after her young one, advised the young calf himself to be careful in pen and forest, and prepared to go. The other mothers and the calf tried to dissuade Punyakoti. Whoever gave such a promise to a tiger and thought of keeping it? Punyakoti was firm. She had given her word and would keep it. She returned to the forest. When the tiger saw the cow come back as she had promised he was so struck with respect for her that he would not take her life. He said that God would not approve of his taking such a good life and gave up his own life. The cow returned and there was great rejoicing in the farm.

A few verses may be given to show the manner of the narrative. The first pieces run:

How shall I describe  
The life of cowherd Kalinga  
Who lived in Karnataka  
Radiant midst the world?

How shall I describe  
The life of cowherd Kalinga  
Who had his farmyard within  
The forest close to the hills?

The cowherd rose at early dawn  
And bathed in the river  
And made the mark upon his face  
And neatly tied his hair.

That is to say, he finished his toilet.

And 'neath a growing mango tree  
He stood and played upon his flute  
And joyous summoned to his side  
The cows that stood around.

"Come O Ganga, come O Gowri,  
Come O Thungabhadra, come;  
Come O best of cows and mothers,  
Come," he sang to them.

The cows all heard the cowherd's call  
And all came near unto him;  
And udders overflowed with milk  
And filled the vessels to the brim.

This is the cow's farewell to her sisters:

"O my mothers, O my sisters,  
O loved sisters of my mother,  
Treat this orphaned calf, I pray you,  
As a young one of your own."

This is her advice to her calf:

"Go not to the ends to graze,  
Nor go too near the hill;  
There the cruel tiger watches  
Stay thou well within the herd."

Then:

The cow caressed the calf and said,  
"You lose your dam to-day, my young one;  
The tiger's mouth I go to enter  
The time we owed each other's run."

The calf remonstrates:

Then to the mother said the calf  
"Why my mother should you go?  
Wherefore should you make me orphan?  
Stay, mother, where you are."

And the cow replies:

"Truth is father, truth is mother,  
Truth is friend and all relations;  
God will not approve, I know,  
A life that breaks a promise made.  
"I will not break the word I gave,  
I will not think dishonest thought:  
True to promise I shall go,  
And shall not swerve from this resolve."

The last scene is thus described: The cow having  
come and offered her flesh,

The tiger heard the offer made,  
His eyes overflowed with tears;  
And he thought, "If I eat this mother  
Sure, God will not approve."  
And said, "You are my sister  
What gain I slaying you?"  
Which having said, the tiger-king  
Straightway lay down and died.

And the poem ends with the usual benediction.

An absurd story, one may feel inclined to say, reading the summary and the verses here given. As relating to a tiger and a cow, it is made unnecessarily impossible. For, accepting the main incidents for the sake of the moral as an animal story, there is really no reason why the tiger should have given up its life. To make a tiger talk of God seems also ludicrous. The poet of the story should have felt much of this criticism himself. The people who hear it also know that no such cow or tiger can exist. To the unsophisticated reader or the average audience, however, the animals as such are out of focus and vague shadows. The mind is engaged by the ideas for which the animals stand. Cow and tiger are out of view and the mother and the young one, the other mothers and the enemy, the honesty of the mother and the sorrow of the young one, the sympathy of the other mothers and the magnanimity of the enemy—these only are present. To sympathy, the soul here is more than the body. The facts are merely mask in such a case ; the characters in the drama are the living truths behind. The story is well known ; yet, few people, hearing it, are able to restrain tears or ejaculation of admiration or triumph as the narrative develops.

## IX

What large variety of folksong there is in the Karnataka should have appeared from these examples ; also how good the poetry in them is. At its best this poetry is classic in manner and content. The only reason for calling it popular is that it comes from the people and is understood by the people ; and that the



verse is often in a local dialect. The three-line verses picturing the life of women are of high level. The sentiment in them is of the finest and it finds direct and telling expression. Their similes might well make poetry of a more learned order envious. The poetry is warm with the incidents of the people's life and, suggesting even more than it tells of the longings and the pathos that lie so close to that life, it has a strange power of moving. Even when this poetry does not reach such heights, it reflects very faithfully the culture of the people and their taste and their judgment.

## 8. PLACE NAMES AND STORIES

PLACE names in the Karnataka are often interesting. Some of them show a keen poetic sense; others are based on legends; round others, like *Saguna*, peculiar to the Malnad, popular fancy has woven stories; and all such names are reminiscent of a culture that has grown through the centuries and brooded over generations of men.

The jasmine is perhaps the favourite flower of the Kannada people. It will have been noticed that it recurs frequently in folk-song and also that jasmine-white is a phrase used in describing Siva. The flower is found associated with many villages all over the country; one village is the village of jasmine; another the double jasmine; another the jasmine blossom. The Kannada name of the flower *Mallige* has a soft and liquid sound. This also must have weighed with the persons coining the names for their villages. The name combinations are soft and pleasant to the ear. The *Champak* occurs in several names. *Champak* wood is a common name in the hill country and simply Champak is found in the plains. The lotus similarly appears in many names, "Lotus Tank", "Lotus Pond". In other names, the word *Siri* or *Amruta* occurs. *Siri* is wealth or prosperity, and *Amruta* is nectar. We have the courtyard of wealth, the prosperous one, the abode of wealth; the town of nectar and the village of nectar. Other names show even greater poetic sense: the dweller on the peak, the mellifluous note or the fragrant wood, the lane of pearl. *Banavasi*, "the dweller in the wood", is

a historic name. One village is called *Bellibathu*, the silver cup, for no reason that is apparent to the stranger. A hill in Mysore District is called *Bellibetta*—the silver hill. Several places are called *Bilikere* or *Belagola*—the white lake or pond. One place is called the village of the moon. It would appear that these people loved their villages and loved to give them fine names.

Many place names are based on legends and stories from the *Puranas* and many places without such names claim connection with some Puranic story, particularly of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In some of these cases, Rama is said to have lived in the locality for some time with Sita and Lakshmana. In others, he is said to have left the mark of his feet. Many are the riverside places where Sita is believed to have dwelt and bathed in the river. The water, the people will say, is still yellow because of the turmeric that Sita used then. In cases where this can be verified, the yellow is generally due to coloured lichen which has grown on the rock. Popular fancy is not interested in this verification. It indeed discourages verification. Many too are the places where the five Pandava brothers lived with their mother and where one or the other of them made a hearth or a pond or mortar and pestle for their old mother. The village mother and son think with wonder of the trouble that came to the Pandava princes and to their mother and of the mutual love which made their exile bearable and even pleasant. They love to think that part of the *Bharata* story took place in the vicinity of their villages.

Saguna as a personal name is frequent in the Malnad. It is believed that the Sanskrit word *Sakuna* has

become *Saguna* in Kannada by a process of transformation familiar as between the two languages. *Sakuna* means omen. There is a hill called "Sakunagiri" near the village of Sakraypatna, generally called Sakrepatna, about fourteen miles from Chikmagalur. Within a few miles of this hill is the hill of Bababudan believed to be the Chandradrona Parvata of Sanskrit literature. This is the hill to which, according to the story in the *Ramayana*, Hanuman came from Lanka for the drug that would revive Rama's brother Lakshmana from the swoon into which he was thrown by the impact of Ravana's *Astaghantasakti*. The story is amplified by local tradition here with the detail that as he came to the spot where is this hill of good omen he felt a tremor in his right shoulder. Tremor of the right shoulder is considered an omen of coming success. Hanuman went to Chandradrona Parvata, carried it to Lanka and helped to bring Lakshmana to life again. Now, this hill (says tradition) got this name from the fact that Hanuman had a good omen when he passed over it.

On the Bababudan Hills is a natural lake which is known as the Lake of Wind. There is a depression in the contour of the ridge here through which the wind from the plains blows fiercely. The opening is called the way of the wind. A large view of the plains is got by any one who looks from the hill through the opening. It is obvious that the lake and the opening have been named after the wind for the same reason—that the wind blows fiercely through this place. Popular imagination has, however, a story about the lake. The Pandava brothers lived here for some time. Kunti wanted water just where she was cooking and Bhima,

therefore, hit the ground with his mace and made the lake. The lake has been called after Wind, the father of Bhima.

A place name connected with an episode in the *Ramayana* on the borders of Karnataka is *Leypākshi*. It is said that when Ravana had run away with Sita, Rama and Lakshmana came this way in search of her. At this spot, they saw something like a bird, huge and blood-stained, lying on the ground. Rama thought that it was a *Rakshasa* and said to Lakshmana, "Give me my bow and arrow. I shall kill this *Rakshasa*." Lakshmana said, "Wait a little, brother. It looks like a bird—not like a *Rakshasa*," and went and saw that it was Jatayu, the King of Birds. Rama came up. Jatayu had seen Ravana taking Sita and stood in his way and tried to stop him. Ravana had cut the bird's wings, dashed him down to earth and gone away. Jatayu was mortally wounded but held life in the body for as long as he could, in the hope that Rama might come that way and that he might report to him what he knew of Sita. When Rama came up and saw it was a wounded bird, he stroked its feathers, spoke kindly to it and said "*Ley Pakshi*" which, in Telugu, means "Rise, bird". Jatayu could not rise. He told Rama what had happened and gave up the body, and Rama performed the obsequies and went forward on his journey. At the spot where this happened, people built a village and called it *Leypakshi*. *Pakshi* came later to be pronounced as *Pākshi* and that is why the village is called *Leypākshi* now.

Another place name in which Rama and Lakshmana are used shows a combination of fancy and

satire. The two brothers travelled down from Ayodhya in the greatest harmony. Lakshmana never once disobeyed his brother's slightest wish. When they had come to the spot where the village referred to now stands, he said to Rama, *Tirugana*, *Tirugana* ("Brother turn back; Brother turn back") meaning that they should go back to Ayodhya. Rama argued with him but in vain. Then, just to please Lakshmana, he went back a short distance. Lakshmana followed him and then said, "Brother, where are we going?" Rama said: "You were very obstinate that we should go back; so I have come some distance." Lakshmana said: "I am sorry. I do not know what possessed me. Let us go forward. How can we go to Ayodhya?" Rama agreed and they turned again. Again, when they reached this spot, Lakshmana became obstinate and disobedient. Rama thought that something was wrong with the place they were standing on and turned back and went round by two or three hundred paces. Lakshmana became reasonable immediately they left the spot and followed his brother further south. The place where Lakshmana said *Tirugana* got that name since then. If the wag who tells the story is to be believed, no young person in that place obeys mother, brother or father.

Another place name round which popular fancy has wound such a story is "Bandalike" in Shimoga District. *Bandalike* or *Bandanike* is the Kannada name for an orchid or a parasitic growth on trees. The name of the village is apparently this word. Local humour, however, connects the word with an occurrence in the life of Siva and Parvati. Siva, we are told, once got tired of the monotony of domestic felicity and left home

at night when Parvati was asleep and came away to the woods. Parvati awoke later and, missing Siva, wondered where he had gone, looked over the whole house, and not finding him went out in search of him. Siva had disguised himself as a huntsman of the forest tribes, but Parvati made him out from a distance and came up with speed. As the dried leaves of the forest crackled under her steps, Siva turned and saw that his wife had after all followed him and caught him. In disgust at his failure to escape her he said *Bandaleeke* (This lady has come). *Bandaleeke* was later shortened to *Bandalike* in pronunciation and the village built in the place got the name. Siva resigned himself to happy fate and he and his companion roamed the woods together thereafter till they felt inclined to go back to their heavenly abode.

Some of these stories seem to have a historical background. At Ballalarayanadrug, where the Nagar Queen Veerammaji went to escape from Haider, a sudden drop in the hill-side is pointed out and a story is told how some pregnant woman dropped from the top of the hill there and was killed. The story-teller generally adds that the cry of a little child and the voice of a mother comforting it can be heard there at night even now. Connected with Nijagal in Tumkur District there is a tragic story of a queen and her brother. There was a local chieftain here once and he had two wives, having married the second one because the first one bore no children. The junior queen gave him a son. She had a brother who had come and stayed in the palace. He was somewhat of a scamp and misbehaved to some woman or other in the town and was

rebuked by the chieftain. The young man bore him a grudge on this account and, when the Mahrattas came next, he let them into the fort. The chieftain was killed in the fight that ensued. The traitor's sister was overwhelmed with grief and shame that her brother had wrought such ruin. When, soon after this, the Mahratta general asked her to become his mistress, she felt that the only thing for her to do was to put an end to her own life and her brother's. So she pretended to agree to all that was proposed to her and arranged for a procession of herself and her brother on the rampart. At one point there is a sudden drop from the rampart. When they reached the spot the queen said to her brother: "Brother, you and I brought evil to this place. We ought not to live," and clasped him and jumped with him over the parapet. They were both dead when they reached ground.

Some of these stories were obviously intended to teach a moral to the people. An example is the story connected with Basavangudi in Bangalore City. Once upon a time, says the story, there lived here a wealthy land-owner. He was very niggardly and would give nothing to the poor. Siva who gave him all the wealth was sad at the man's miserly ways and called to Nandi and said, "Go to earth and teach the man to live better". Nandi came to earth as a bull. It was the time when groundnut plants were in flower and you could see acres on acres of the wealthy man's land gay with them. With bold eyes and daggerlike horns, Nandi walked coolly into the field and began to graze. The men who were watching the field came up and tried to drive the bull away. It would not go and looked so fierce that



they dared not approach it. They came home and reported it to their master. He was vexed with them for being afraid of a bull and sent other men to help them. One hundred men could not drive it away. It would not let them come near. They all came and told the owner that they were helpless. The man got angry and went to the field himself. The bull had by then eaten the flower and leaf over a large plot of land. The owner went up with a stick to the bull. It had not allowed others to come near at all, but when this man came it took no notice of him. He had come up in a rage and lifted the stick high to give a smacking blow to the intruder. That was all he could do. He could lift up the stick but not bring it down. The lifted arm stayed so and he felt as if it had no elbow and had been fixed in a vice. He wondered and looked in terror at the bull. Nandi was looking at the man, not fiercely but as in pity, and with a glow suggestive of heaven about his beautiful large head; and the man heard a voice saying: "I am Nandi. I have come to teach you to give up your miserliness." He said: "Forgive me. I have been a sinner." Nandi said: "You are forgiven. Do not think your wealth is all for yourself. Give to the poor." The man promised to do so. Nandi told him finally to build a temple for him there and arrange for an annual fair. The man did this. The temple is there now and the fair takes place annually.

Other stories are apparently intended to enhance the prestige of particular localities or perhaps to be understood symbolically. An example of this is the story that is told of Antarganga or "Hidden Ganges" of the Kolar Hills. It is a beautiful place and someone

with a sense of beauty built here, as others did elsewhere, at some period not remembered, a temple and a pond and placed on the edge of the pond a sculptured Basava through whose mouth all the water percolating from the hill around pours into it. It is possible also that some person or persons in the past led a hermit's life here. The story is told that a hermit who dwelt here used, every morning, to go to the Ganges and bathe there and come back for meditation the rest of the day and night. Years passed and the hermit grew old and it was hard for him to go to the Ganges every day. Mother Ganges realised this and told him one day: "Do not trouble to come here every day. Stay where you are. I shall come there myself." The hermit said: "You are gracious as a mother should be. I shall stay there as you direct and shall wait for you. But how shall I know that you have come?" Ganga said: "Throw that stick you have in your hand into me now. I shall bring it with me. Then you will know." The hermit did so and came back. The next day he watched near the pond. The water came and presently he saw it bringing the stick which he had thrown into the Ganges. He knew then that mother Ganga kept her word and no more went to Benares for his bath.

Other place-stories are in the nature of heroic legend. The story of Jakkana and Dankana, his son, the reputed architects and sculptors of the Hoysala temples, and especially of the one at Belur, is well known. It is the Karnataka counterpart of the story of Sorab and Rustum. It has been suggested that such a person as Jakkana or Dankana may not have existed and that they may be the Kannada forms of Dakshinacharya,

the name of the imaginary architect to whom later generations wished to ascribe the sculpture and construction of the temples. The suggestion seems far-fetched and unnecessary as Jakka and Danka are common enough names. The story, however, has no doubt about the father and son having worked at these temples. When Jakkana was young and a son had just been born to him he left home to build temples and did not come back. The wife was grieved but being young she could not go in search of him. So the years passed and the boy Dankana, Jakkana's son, grew. One day, stung by the taunts of some playmates that he had no father to look after him, the boy came and asked his mother where his father was. She told him that his father was a great architect and had gone away to build temples. The boy immediately set out in search of the father. He went from one place to another where temples had been built, and so came at last to Belur where the great temple was in progress. He went in and found a sculptor working away at a beautiful image, but saw that the stone was unsound. He said to the sculptor: "Look here. You are wasting labour. This stone has a flaw and is not suitable for making this image." The sculptor said: "How do you know? Do you think you know my business better than myself?" The boy said, "Very well, go on if you like, but if you cut the stone near the navel you will see that there is a hollow there and some water and a little frog in it". The other man said: "You are very conceited. I do not mind losing the work I have done so far but must teach you a lesson. Supposing the stone has no flaw what penalty will you undergo?" "Anything you like." "You

should allow your right hand to be cut off." "Yes." "If it is flawed I shall have my right hand cut off." "As you please." The sculptor then put the chisel against the navel of the image and gave a blow with the hammer. The stone came off in a flake and within was a small cavity with a little water and a tiny frog in it. The older sculptor was astonished and embraced the youngster in admiration and asked whose son he was. He said, "I am the son of Jakkana, the great sculptor". The man scrutinised his features and said, "And where are you going?" "I am going in search of my father." "You have found him then," said the sculptor, "for I am Jakkana." Father and son embraced each other and Jakkana enquired about the household and then said that he should cut off the right hand. The son and other people tried to dissuade him. He said, "I have said it and must do it". The hand was cut off. Then the father or son dreamt that they should go back to their village and build a temple there and that then the father would get his hand back. They did accordingly and built the temple at the village near Tumkur, now called Kaidala. Jakkanachari got his hand again and lived to build many more temples with the assistance of his gifted son.

This kind of story in which a son goes in search of his father is common among folk-stories. So too is the story of a king who has lost his way and receives food from some poor old woman and is discovered later to be the king. A story of this kind is told about Bangalore which, in Kannada, is called "Bengaluru". Once upon a time, we are told, a prince lost his way and came to this spot and received some parched beans

from a woman. He built a village there and, in gratitude for the hospitality he had received, called it *Bengālūru*—"the village of parched beans". *Bengālūru* has now become *Benglūru*. The name is in reality derived probably from *Vengaluru*, the village of *Vengala* or *Venkata*, but the story is good and people like to repeat it.

*Madalingana Kanive* or "Madalinga's Pass" is a point on the road between *Chiknaikanahalli* and *Tumkur*. Once upon a time a young man of this part of the country who had married a girl in a village near here was going this way to his own village with his wife and her sister and their mother. The road below goes round the hill. It is possible to go up the hill and get down the other side and save a considerable distance in walking. Few people think of doing this, however, as the hill is steep and what is gained in walking is more than lost in climbing. That day, when *Madalinga* and his companions made the journey, the afternoon was very hot; as they came laughing and talking, the elder sister felt more and more unwilling to leave both mother and sister and begged her mother to marry her sister to *Madalinga*. The old woman scouted the idea, but the young man and the young woman did not seem unwilling. When they had gone a little further, the young man asked the mother-in-law for the hand of her second daughter. The old woman did not like the proposal and half in jest said, pointing to the hill before them, "Who can look after two such wives as this? If you will go up this hill walking backward, then you may marry my second daughter also. For a man who cannot do this, one wife should be sufficient."

Madalinga agreed and told them to walk round and began to go up the hill. "Let your second daughter give me water to drink when I come down on the other side," he said. The old woman was sorry she had made this proposal and begged him to come back. He would not. Mother and daughters came round the hill and awaited the young man. It was a very hot day and they were all thirsty. They had, however, one small vessel of water and, thinking that he would be far more thirsty when he came, they reserved the water for him. He came after all but was quite exhausted when he reached there. He could not even speak, so thirsty and tired was he. He signalled to them for water. The younger sister took the vessel to him, but in the joy and confusion of the moment dropped the vessel. All the water was spilt. They ran to the nearest village for water. It was long before it could come. By then Madalinga died.

This tragic story of the common people may well conclude our selection of stories relating to places. Unrelieved by epic heroism, but not devoid of heroic quality, unadorned by high romance but not lacking that romantic touch which occasionally brightens even the commonest lives and picturing the dread doom of death on youthful hope in the very hour of triumph, it may be taken as embodying a typical mood of the people. This is not to say that they are generally gloomy. They take and find their share of joy in life. The joy is, however, placed in a setting of pain and not far behind the laughter are tears. Other moods of the people also appear here: love of the heroic in the past, admiration for a life like Jatayu's given up in

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a good cause, humorous recognition of their own quarrelsomeness and of the monotony of prolonged domestic happiness, love of charity and a sense of the sacredness imparted by beautiful natural surroundings. In hearing these stories one almost hears the heart-beats of the people's life. It is true that the miracle element and the superstitious element come up rather frequently in the stories but this is the case with folk-story all the world over. The best part of man's nature is no doubt that which corresponds to light but it has somehow always preferred to wrap itself in cloud, to move behind a mist.

## 9. CONCLUSION

SOMETHING of the effort made in the Karnataka in the past to raise the level of popular culture and something of the result achieved should have appeared from these essays. There has been no attempt here to cover the whole ground of Karnatak culture or to deal exhaustively even with the topics selected. The object of these essays has been to give an idea of two great movements which, along with the central religion, moulded the thought of the Karnataka within the last thousand years and of the manner in which the teaching is reflected in the common mind and lifted the outlook of the common life. Those who know the sayings of the Sivasaranas and the songs of the Haridasas will see how God became so real a referee to the street-fighter, how to the Sivachar old woman the life after death has become so real a fact and how it comes about that a sick person says "My body is not well", rather than "I am not well". The meanings suggested in these cases are not far-fetched. Philosophy, religion and art were combined in this culture to play upon the whole of life even of common men. Basavanna and Purandaradasa had no lower ambition than the regeneration of mankind itself. They hoped for the people the best they knew and tried in their own lives to realise what they could of the hope. They put the best thought into the simplest language and organised mendicant orders to preach to the people. They summoned the commonest men to the joys of the higher life of which they had got a vision. The best elements in our people's life can



still be traced to them. They have not been superseded and, if we understand their teaching in the right spirit, there is no need to supersede them. A popular preacher will still find that these names have a power as of magic to open the people's mind to light.

Great as is the good effected by the movements started by the teachers, their work is yet incomplete. They did not find full acceptance even in their own day nor even among their own followers. To an imagination that can see the circumstances suggested in their sayings and songs, Basavanna seems a lonely and wistful figure and Purandaradasa a voice in the wilderness. Again and again one can hear in their words a cry as of baffled hope for their people. They made sacrifices for truth and strove to establish it on a firm basis and to make it the property of all men. Some people saw their good intention and some did not; and even those who saw did not always follow the teaching. The teacher made the throne ready for truth but found that the followers would place on it not the truth for which he made it ready, but the teacher himself. The teaching also made some mistakes. For example, when Basavanna spoke of Siva and Purandaradasa of Vishnu, they seemed to think that they were speaking of different divine persons. They do not appear to have seen that they were calling the One God by these different names. The best thought of the country has tended this way and it has been said that the Supreme Being is called Siva by the Saivas, Brahma by the Vedantists, Arhant by the Jainas and Buddha by the Bauddhas. The time of Basavanna and Purandaradasa however was apparently not ripe for the acceptance of this idea by the

people. We thus find sometimes acrimonious language used by the Virasaivas about Vaishnavas and the Vaishnavas about the Saivas. In later years, the better side of the teaching which is the more difficult to follow has been neglected but the slogan Siva is best or Vishnu is best clung to as the more easy badge of sect. The two schools had much in common and could have worked together for popular uplift. They formed into opposing camps instead and are not unwilling to nurse their differences even to-day.

We need not feel surprised at this. Deterioration and mistake of this kind are common enough occurrence in religions. The treatment of each name for God as the name of a different person is an error to which all religions have succumbed. The Jews worshipped the one and only God, but they admitted there were other gods. Christian and Muhammadan to-day seem to make the same mistake. Man is yet far in religion from the ideal position of treating the names and descriptions of God in vogue among various peoples as so many efforts to describe the Supreme Being who is one and not more than one. Like children who may quarrel about the greatness of the sun who lights their streets, man yet in the childhood of spiritual growth makes others' ideas of God into separate gods lesser than his own and shows impatience at their defects. It is not therefore in a carping spirit that this defect in the teaching of the Sivasaranas and the Haridasas as popularly understood is mentioned here. We have to grow out of the errors made in the past and to do this have first to admit them. Since mankind started to shape its religion it has reached various stages and has been

travelling forward. What man needs is the universal religion. We are nearer that ideal to-day than our forefathers could be in the circumstances of their time. Our teachers have now to pool all the ideas of God conceived all over the world. The first step in this process is to realise that the ideas that prevail amongst us are themselves no more than efforts to describe the One God. The truth was perceived in the past but was not properly published and practised. It has now to be realised.

One other weakness which this culture has developed requires also to be emphasised. This is the spirit of compromise carried to excess which has been referred to earlier. Karnatak culture to-day, like all Indian culture, shows the lowest forms of animism in juxtaposition with high philosophy and mysticism. This is often spoken of by leaders of Hinduism as the great merit of popular religion. It no doubt is a merit in a religion to preach tolerance but as now applied the principle has become a source of weakness as well as strength. The lower forms of worship are stated to be suitable to persons of corresponding stages of spiritual development. This is probably correct, but a corollary is drawn from this statement that all religions are true and from this corollary a further corollary is derived that no one can try to convert another person to his view. The principle of tolerance enunciated at first to prevent strife is thus reduced to absurdity by the application of a little bad logic; and tolerance in spiritual matters has been developed into indifferentism in all phases of life. Much, therefore, as the times cried for reform, this apathy masquerading as liberalism has within the

last three hundred years led the better classes to neglect the important duty of educating their fellow men. The principle that the lower religion is lower truth is to be realised not only by the person who believes the higher truth but by him who believes in the lower truth itself. Such realisation is to be encouraged and helped. This duty our society has forgotten for some time, and much evil which the teachers of the past tried to remove has been suffered to eat into the vitals of the national life.

How long this state of things would have continued it is difficult to say. As matters grew worse and the need for reform became insistent it is possible that new teachers would have arisen. This had happened previously and might have happened again. The speculation is however idle. Before a new teacher could come or a new movement arise, there came into the nation's life Christianity, English Education and Western Civilization. All three have acted as forces of liberation. Partly because it comes from the casteless society of Europe and partly because of the teaching of Christ, Western Christianity awakened the better mind of Hinduism to the position of the lower classes and the evils of the caste system as it is in force to-day. English education took us out of the ruts into which we had fallen, broadened the sphere of knowledge and let in light to many a corner of the mind where darkness had been reigning. Western civilization has taught us to make more of the world. We knew before that man does not live by bread alone but talked often as if we did not know that he could not live without it altogether. It cured us of this error. It has taught us to ask the State to be an instrument for the people's welfare and

roused our sense of nationhood. When previously value was attached to the individual in our thought, it was as a soul. The vote has now added to man's value as a soul his value as a citizen. Truth which could be realised only by philosophers in the past and which when realised need not have been acted upon even by a philosopher is now not only realised but acted upon by every candidate for success in politics.

Some harm also has come from these liberating forces. The messenger who came with Christianity came also with a sense of superiority that was nearly unhealthy. To him Christianity was the one and only true religion. He applied Christ's direction that a man should give up all to follow him literally, and counted success by numbers. Between precept and practice there is divergence in the following of any faith. The missionary looked closely at the practice of the people and condemned it and straightway proceeded to preach Christianity and make converts. He made no attempt to see if he could use the culture that already existed in his work of uplift. This attitude did harm to the Kingdom of Christ, for people who would have accepted Christ's teaching gladly if it had been presented in a friendly guise were made thus to fear and distrust it. It did harm to the people also, for it led them to question many things that were good along with those which were bad.

The education that came through English similarly did some harm along with good. It turned the fierce light of an unsympathetic reason on institutions and ceremonies which had grown through the centuries and which could be understood only with reference to their

context. Many an ugliness was thus accentuated; much that was not meant to be examined through reason appeared absurd. What the previous generation observed as dead formula was given up by the later generation as dead. In Bengal and the Punjab, movements like the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj or the Ramakrishna Order of Sanyasis arose to meet the needs of the new generation. No such movements came into being in the Karnataka. The people were as sheep without a shepherd.

English education has also delayed the coming of the shepherd. Until it came, the life of the people was one and they all drank from one spring of knowledge, whether muddy or clear. The new education introduced a barrier of language between the educated and the uneducated. Once before there had been this barrier in this country. Strong men like Basavanna and Purandaradasa had broken through it and made the vernacular the language of knowledge. Centuries of this tradition had led a poet to ask what there was in Sanskrit that could not be found in Kannada if the latter could teach the highest knowledge. All this good work was demolished by the introduction of English as the language of higher education. It is true that there was no explicit neglect of the vernaculars. In fact, it was declared that the new educated would be the means of communicating the highest knowledge through the vernaculars to the people. English was to be used for bringing into existence a class of persons who would act as the teachers of their people and who would enrich the literatures in the mother-tongue. Such an idea is a dream at the best ; it was made the shadow

of a dream by making knowledge of English the passport to employment in the public services. The men who learnt English had all possible reason for developing their knowledge in it; and none whatever for developing their knowledge of the vernacular. The teachers were trained but they could not communicate with the pupils. Besides, they found such great pleasure within easy reach in English literature that they had no mind for the hard task of making the literature of their mother-tongue. The ship that went to bring a rich cargo stayed near a foreign shore and the crew spent the time there lotus-eating. It was as if a young man who was sent to Europe to pass the Tripos and return to make the family fortune married a foreign girl and settled in her country and forgot the family.

How much longer the vernaculars would have had to wait to get the services of the English-educated man if altruistic love for his fellow countrymen had to be the main motive, it is hard to say. The men who supported education through English in this hope should perhaps have had to be uneasy in their graves for centuries till another Basavanna appeared and led a new movement. Fortunately other forces came into play and the end has been hastened. The national movement of the last thirty years has more and more had to use the language of the people for their education. An atmosphere of national pride and love of things Indian was created. The minds of the educated went back to the literature and the religion of the past; they looked on them and understood them with a new meaning. They felt a new love for the people tingling in their veins. It is true that still in our education

English claims or gets the greater part of attention. Inheriting a system, we still use English in administration as if any large part of the population understood that language; and in courts of law where judge, accused, witness and lawyer, all know Kannada, evidence is often recorded and judgment delivered in English as if it did not matter in what language this is done. The position will, no doubt, change as it is realised that all this is not quite sound. An awakening has already come of which the good results are visible in literature, in art and in social life. The task now awaits the country of moulding the new culture combining the best part of the heritage of the past and the best that has come with Western education.

To understand this heritage itself is an important part of the task. If we look only at the worse half of the culture we are likely to think that the best course would be to wipe off the past and begin anew. Many people to-day get this feeling when they look at the harm that caste has done and is doing to the national cause. They have the same feeling when they look at the absurdities to which image worship has led in our temples. They get a similar feeling when they think of the helplessness, to which retrospective application of the doctrine of *Karma* has reduced the people. To some the only course in all these cases seems to be to uproot that which has led to the error and not attempt pruning of twig or cutting of branch. This impatience is natural but not wise. In the first place, the error is not a necessary result of the doctrine or belief from which it has arisen. In the second place, it would not be possible to remove doctrines and beliefs from the life of



a people in this manner. Lastly, even if we believed that these errors are inevitable consequences of the doctrines and could uproot them completely, we may be certain that the new doctrine that we teach in place of the old one will breed errors in much the same way. A hundred years hence, the new way of life would have developed undesirable features of which the teacher had no idea when he preached the new doctrine. Equally unwise would be a reactionary admiration of all that the past has left us. It may seem that there is no great danger of this as few persons with modern knowledge are likely to support a programme to perpetuate existing conditions. Reaction will, however, raise its head when we propose a synthesis of the teaching of various sects. Each sect will try to push its own forms and symbols as the best and most reasonable. A reformer wishes to get rid of an unpleasant caste name and calls the depressed classes Harijan. An ardent follower immediately rakes up the rivalry between Siva and Hari and says that they should be called Harajan, not Harijan. Care is required to avoid controversy and new divisions in dispute over non-essential details. It is the better part of the culture that has to be revived, not its slogans and shibboleths; the spirit that makes for harmony and not the form which leads to difference. Whatever the form adopted, the goal of all the creeds was a good life for their followers. In this fact is the basis of harmonious co-operation for progress between various groups.

Looking at the heritage of the Karnataka from this point of view, we see that there are many good and noble elements in the culture of the people. Living

long together they have learnt to defer to forms of worship different from their own. By long practice, they have learnt that religion is mainly a personal matter. To most of them, the personality of God needs no proof and the truth realised by the Christian saint that God cares for each as if He cared for him only, and for all as if they were no more than one is axiomatic. The old order has inculcated a positive system of morality among them and prescribed social duties and charitable acts for the public good. It has created efficient machinery for the propagation of knowledge, and free communication of thought between the high and the low. In social life and religious worship, it has tried to combine the arts and to bring into the commonest life something of the joy that comes by contact with poetry and music and something of the light that comes from philosophy and meditation. At its best, it has made effective use of the language of the people for the education of the masses and developed a tradition of instruction through symbol and parable that was obviously highly successful.

It has of course defects often arising from these qualities. In trying to make the idea of God personal, the system ended in puerilities of temple worship and such institutions as that of the Devadasis. In insisting upon religion as an individual matter and organising communal life in the land essentially on the basis of village economy, it neglected the larger idea of institutional religion and the State. In an attempt to impress on the popular imagination the omnipotence of the godhead the miracle element has been extravagantly developed. Where the teacher encouraged

belief in a miracle which he did not share he was thinking more of the advantage of the faith in God which resulted than of the untruth on which that result was based. He was making use of an error to feed faith in God. Ideas of personal cleanliness have become so exaggerated in practice as to submerge the far more important belief that God dwells in all and to become a standing insult to humanity. Similar exaggeration of the idea of woman's chastity led to the dethronement of the goddess of the household and to careful control of her activities with a view to purity. In insisting on the need for anxious consideration and controlled life before disagreeing with established teaching, this culture choked thought and instilled excessive obedience to authority. This disability attached even to the teachers of the established doctrine. Like wells in towns meant for the orthodox which are merely pits into which water is led by pipes, and in which no attempt is made to touch the springs of water underground, the teachers could only repeat what they had learnt, and could not add to it from their own thought. Thought in them was not stimulated to add to what they learnt. In preaching tolerance of differing ideas of the god-head this culture led people to treat different ideas of God as so many gods, until as Basavanna said, there is no standing room on account of this number of gods. The very legitimate law of cause and effect enunciated by the doctrine of *Karma* has been applied backwards to life; and a questionable superstructure in the form of a doctrine of helplessness built on that doctrine. Much other error of the same kind is familiar to most persons who look at this social life.

The present and the coming generations have to address themselves to the work of clearing the error and restating the old doctrines in the light of modern thought. The work is not easy nor will it meet with approval in all quarters. Opposition from various sections of the people is certain. More formidable than this opposition will be the laughter of persons who will think that this society is borrowing foreign feathers. All such persons will have to realise that both the opposition and the laughter proceed from a fundamental error. The religion of this people is not a dead religion nor is its culture a subject for only antiquarian study. This religion and culture are both alive and growing. The statement that as the old body decays the spirit takes new forms applies to a civilisation as it does to an individual. There is no need for regret if the old forms go; nor for hesitation in casting them off. The important thing is to maintain the spirit and devise new forms for holding it. If the new form is to be fashioned in the mould of another people's culture, men should so mould it and feel no shame.

There is a story in the *Mahabharata* that one day, in the course of their exile, Yudhishthira and his brothers had to go out chasing a deer. The animal took them far and when the chase was over they were all very weary and thirsty. Yudhishthira sent the brothers one after another to a well that was at some distance to bring water to drink. None of them returned. He went there himself and found all of them lying dead on the steps of the well. As he was wondering what had happened, he heard a voice say: "I am the spirit of

this well. Persons wishing to drink from it should answer questions which I put to them; if any one drinks without answering, he will die." The other brothers had defied the spirit and tried to drink and died. Yudhisthira was told that if he answered his brothers too would get back their life. He was more patient than they and answered the questions and brought his brothers back to life and drank the water.

India's position in the world to-day is that of Yudhisthira in the story. Eldest of the nations, alone of the ancient civilizations still alive, exile from power and confronted with a hundred problems; the similarity is astonishingly complete. These problems that confront the country relate to every aspect of life. How weld this population of such diverse ways into one nation in the modern sense? How teach the various religions that they are parts of the one religion that mankind is building up? How teach the castes to remain castes to work out the fine points of their tradition and yet feel as parts of one unit and not as different units whose interests are in conflict? How give to the ancient religion of the people the coherence of a single structure without restricting the broad base which provides room in it for many types of mind and spirit? How, in fact, continue belief in peace as the sovereign good and yet win the place that is due to it in the lordship of the world? These are among the problems that demand immediate solution in this country, not merely in theory but in the practice of life. All parts of the country have to contribute to the solution and the Karnatak along with the others. It is to be hoped that this land which made noble contributions to Indian

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culture in the past may make in the coming years further contribution not less noble and that this people will reach out again to the beautiful, the good and the true with the intense desire which has often appeared in its history.